

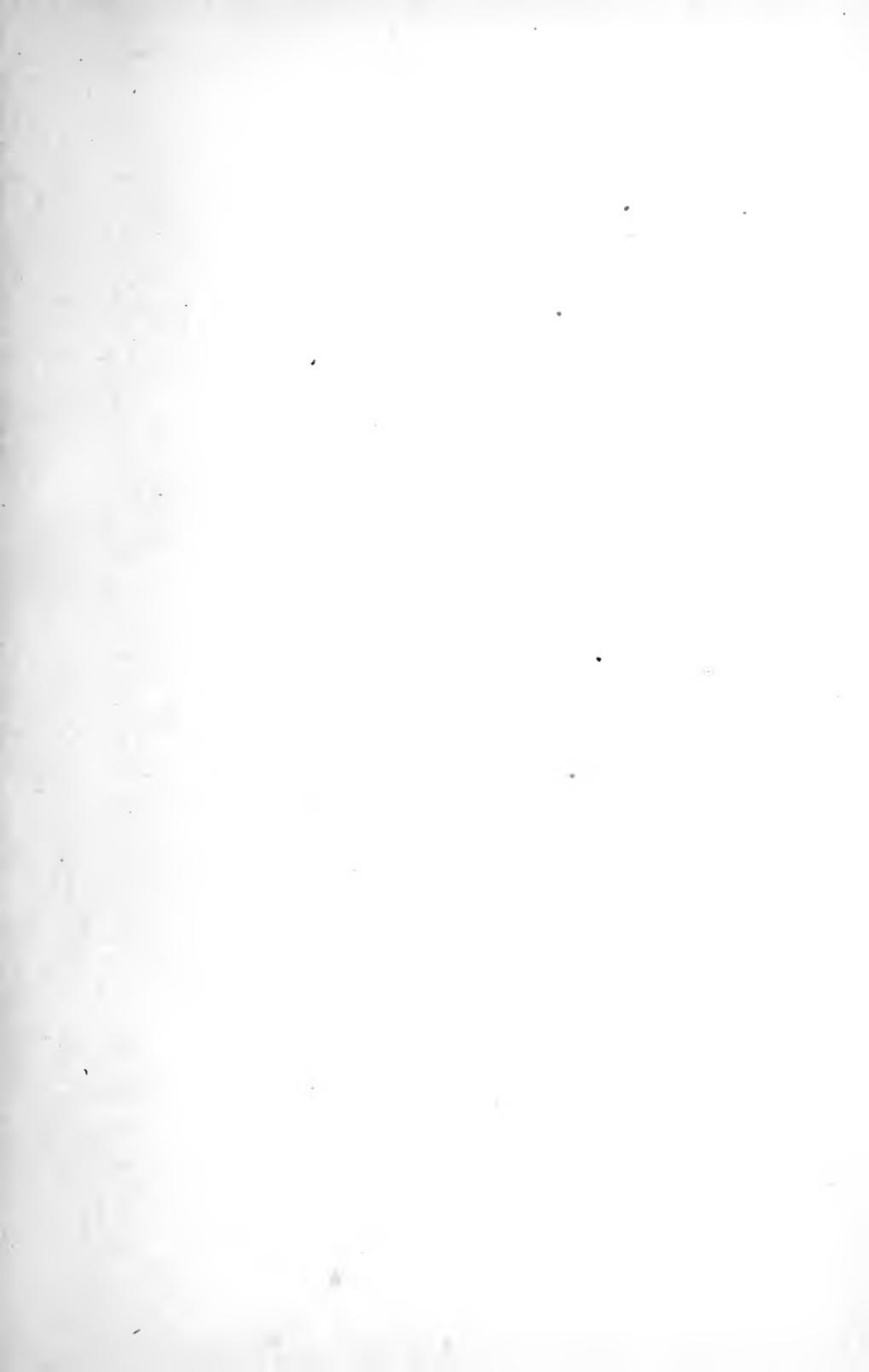
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THROUGH THE YEAR.



THROUGH THE YEAR.

THOUGHTS

*RELATING TO THE SEASONS OF NATURE
AND THE CHURCH.*

BY

HORATIO N. POWERS,

RECTOR OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, CHICAGO.

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TO

ALL WHO BELIEVE IN AN INVISIBLE KINGDOM
AND
ASPIRE AFTER THE BETTER LIFE,

I INSCRIBE THIS VOLUME.

H. N. P.

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From Advent to Lent.

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FROM ADVENT TO LENT.

“Let the righteous be glad.”

PSALMS lxviii. 3.

“That your joy might be full.”

JOHN xv. 11.

I.

A JOYOUS RELIGION.

THE explanation of the existence of any religion is found in the nature of man. Animals can have no religion, because they have no capacity for it. Man has such a capacity, but a capacity that varies according to his spiritual and intellectual advancement. He loves ; he aspires ; he looks out on a world of mystery ; he wants happiness ; death is before him. He is conscious of his limitations and infirmities, and the need of superhuman assistance. So a religion of some kind is inevitable. The best religion will be one that supplies his highest want, that puts his whole nature to its right and intended use. Pure Christianity does this. But there are perversions of Christianity. Let there be misconceptions of the divine character, and hence of the government of the universe and the object of our existence, and religion will show the error.

Now I assume that true religion ought to be promotive of human happiness. "Let the righteous be glad," says the Psalmist. And our Lord among His tenderest words said to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." But joyfulness cannot be

secured by the suppression or disuse or perversion of the natural faculties. True religion gives harmonious play to these, and sanctifies their uses. It is one of the features of man's dignity in the scale of being, that he has a rational soul. The faculty of reason was bestowed for high and noble ends. It is to be used on all subjects that can concern our human interests. To deprecate its employment and its power is to depreciate its great achievements,—the monuments of mechanical invention, the discoveries of science, the choicest fruits of industry and learning, all the splendid utilities that take us out of barbarism and make history illustrious. The faculty of reason is to be employed as well in religion as anywhere else. To say that it is right in God to do what is wrong in man ; that it is good in God to be what is evil in man,—is an affront to the sense with which God has endowed us, and a debasement of it. When God is represented as inconsistent, unjust, cruel, and vindictive, it is just as proper to resent it and deny it as to deny that two and two are ten, or that a circle is a square. It is a poor compliment to the Almighty to use the logical faculty in affairs of daily business,—in planting and reaping, in buying and building,—and to repudiate it when we come to think and act with reference to Him and His blessed word. There are matters, of course, above reason in all the concerns of life ; so, too, in an infinite measure, in the nature and ways of God ; but to acknowledge this fact, and act in accordance with it, does not disparage reason or pour contempt upon it. God does not require us to accept

what we have no faculty to receive, or to do what, by virtue of our very nature, we are absolutely incapable of performing. We are to employ the logical faculty in its legitimate way in every direction that invites useful investigation, and, if the heart is the abode of love, life shall grow richer for these exercises. Used in their proper sphere, every faculty of man becomes an instrument of his happiness, and hence illustrative of the divine glory. Take the desire of knowledge, for instance. We are in the midst of innumerable wonders, with our human necessities pressing us. There is a curiosity to find out the uses of things, to trace results to causes, to uncover the obscurities of history and the plan of creation, to get the equipments for success in the struggle of life. Moreover, there is a pleasure in the very act of learning, in mastering difficulties, in acquiring knowledge, that subserves human comfort and prosperity, and at the same time reveals the infinite wisdom. It is our duty to use this noble faculty of intelligence in every direction where it can be advantageously employed, and the doctrine that it must be restrained lest some notion once held to be sacred — some error of doctrine or practice — should be overthrown, is pernicious. I have known persons myself who stood in fear of learning, and discouraged it on the ground that it was hostile to religion. It only kills the errors and superstitions that ignorance engenders. He who decries actual scientific knowledge virtually decries the wisdom of God in giving man his vast powers, and in building the universe as He has.

Then, as to the æsthetic tastes, the love of the beautiful, the same principle is true. Man is endowed with a feeling for order, symmetry, adaptation, harmony, beauty in its manifold forms. Who endowed him? God. And why did God make the material world so glorious, if it were not to be admired and enjoyed? What purpose serves the loveliness of flower and star, and radiant landscape, and glowing firmament, the light and music and splendor and wonder of the earth, if no eyes behold the miracle and no heart enjoys it? If you say God enjoys it, then truly it is right that His children appreciate what He loves, and has made so fair. One is allowing one side of his nature, and hence one source of enjoyment, to be inoperative by suppressing this faculty of taste. Yet such views of religion are taught as make all regard for the beautiful simply frivolous and sinful, as if God was displeased with the pleasure of His children in the marvels of art and the glories of His handiwork. But to reject the loveliness that fills the universe is to slight the Divine Goodness. True religion enjoys all that reveals the harmony and beauty that are perfect in Him who is in all and over all.

Then, too, as to the natural affections. God is honored by their legitimate exercise. He implanted them. They are the symbols of His love. To think that He begrudges His children the joy of earthly friendships,—the felicities of home and society,—is insulting to His gracious fatherhood. He smiles on the gladness of every heart, on the endearments of the household, the delight of the lover, the parent's tenderness, the spon-

taneous gayety of the child. If there is any thing on earth that is rooted deeply in the nature that God Himself implanted, it is this sacred feeling for kindred, and home, and friends, and country, and the great brotherhood of man. But the blessed gospel has been so misinterpreted as to lead men to think that they did God service by crucifying these natural affections, by trying to extirpate them. The wilderness and monastery bear awful witness to the monstrous follies that have followed the practice of a gloomy and insane asceticism, the effort to please God by the disuse or perversion of what He has given for human good. True religion gives play to all the natural sensibilities and affections of the heart. It consecrates them to their legitimate service, but does not repress or extirpate. God would have every pure emotion, every gift for friendship, every capability for admiration and honor and reverence, employed in the relations of society and the household and the State. Christ came not to destroy, but to save ; and there is no greater perversion of His gospel than the view that God is pleased at the unnatural mortifications of human affections, and that the happiness of His children is not welcome in His sight.

All such mistakes grow out of wrong views of our Father in heaven. So a religion will not be a joyous one with dark and forbidding views of God. Picture God as an arbitrary sovereign, doing what is unjust and requiring what is unreasonable, and the sweetness and hope and joy are all taken out of religion. So where He is taught as frowning upon the innocent

pleasures of mankind ; where He is represented as fore-ordaining vast numbers of immortal beings to everlasting misery, delivering to future woe the generations who have been destitute of His light ; where He is described as making Himself glorious in the agonies of the damned, and executing an arbitrary choice in selecting the candidates for heaven,—then the human mind instinctively and inevitably revolts. Such a being cannot be obeyed, except through the fear of torment ; cannot be enjoyed, save through some strange religious hallucination. He has been described, even in Christian times, by some who thought they understood His word, in a way that makes Him appear to candid, sincere, and affectionate souls as an infinite tyrant. Adhere rigorously to the absolute truth of such doctrines as I have indicated, and human life is shrouded in gloom. The brightness of the material world becomes a hideous mockery. There is no motive for noble enterprise, no inspiration to gracious charities. 'The sweetness dies out of existence. The blossoms of the heart wither away.'

Now, we can never fathom the fulness of God, or formulate all His truth. But, beholding His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, we can get such just conceptions of His character and will as shall make our service a blessing and a joy. We know, indeed, that His will is everlasting good will ; that His justice is not another kind of justice from that which we can understand ; that His love is not another kind of love from that which He puts into our hearts ; that His wisdom is not another kind of wisdom from that which is displayed in

His wonderful works, that day unto day uttereth speech of Him. There are not two kinds of goodness, one for God and another for man. There are not two kinds of justice, one for God and another for man. There are not two kinds of righteousness, one for God and another for man. In goodness and justice and righteousness the quality is the same in both God and man,—the difference is in the quantity and relations. In God the good is absolute and measureless ; in man it is limited, and affected by his infirmities and imperfections. God is the fountain of all goodness, as the sun is the fountain of every ray of light that reaches the earth. So we know that while we reject what is unjust, what is impure, what is untrue, while we love and pursue what is holy and good, we are doing His will. We see that in the way of holiness is the way of salvation. And here, for our rescue and guidance and comfort and refuge, is the divine disclosure of the Son of God. His joy was perfect, because He was a perfect Son ; and as, through the cleansing spirit, we become like Him, we have a portion of His joy. Oh ! beholding Him, in our low estate, full of grace and truth, illustrating every virtue, pouring out His sympathies to souls hungry and thirsty for God ; teaching, consoling, giving life and the light of love ; making gladness in dreary homes, filling the lowly and desponding with blessed hope and the strong confidence of the infinite care ; showing the grand significance of life and the opulent treasures of immortality ; suffering, dying for us, “ the just for the unjust ; ” vanquishing sin and death, and filling eternity with the

glow of His victorious life, — beholding this friend, brother, Saviour, Christ the Lord, “the brightness of the Father’s glory,” — shall we think the God of all a hard master or a cruel judge, or the existence He gives us less than a precious boon? Ah! we know from all this gracious manifestation that life means good ; that in our Lord there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand pleasures for evermore. The whole Gospel is good news, bringing cheer and hope and inspiration to all who have ears to hear. What Christ discloses as the will of God concerning us is in harmony with the constitution of things, — our human nature, condition, and needs. Our happiness will be insured by taking His methods and living His life, which is begotten in obedience and faith. God does not force upon us a religion inconsistent with His perfections, or with the nature He has given us and the place we are to fulfil in His creation. Christianity practically is the use of life in accordance with the divine nature and goodness, and its fruition is blessedness here and hereafter.

I know what is said about this view by those who hold to the hard, mechanical, soulless, arbitrary system of a despotic divine sovereignty, and who make Christianity an afterthought, an invention in the mind of the Almighty to remedy what He previously failed to accomplish. They stigmatize this religion as a religion of sentiment, — one that is quite inadequate for the great needs of a sinful race. But take out of the Christian religion those elements which they profess to treat

with such lightness, if not contempt, and what remains? Throw out the element of common sense; throw out all sensibility to the beautiful, and especially to beauty of a spiritual kind; throw out the experiences of the soul in the sight of the mysteries of life and death, and good and evil, and the presence of the infinite all around us; throw out the exercise of the affectionate nature, all that moves to trust and devotion and charity, and the clinging eagerness of prayer; throw out the love of holiness for its own sake, and the sympathies that reach and clasp the infinitely good and strong in the consciousness of a deathless friendship; throw out all that has the color and fragrance and charm of the heart about it,—and what is left for life but a dry channel, a flowerless waste, the arid sands? Such a religion would be good for nothing; nay, religion itself would expire, for the very basis of it, and elements of it, would be overthrown. Those who sneer so much at a religion that accords with our human want; that is grounded in the very constitution and necessities of life; that makes provision for the mind, the heart, the imagination, the whole man,—will find, when they come to comprehend the situation, that the sneer is against God Himself.

We are placed here for a benevolent purpose; and that theology which makes the world darker than it is; which depresses the candid, truth-seeking mind, instead of cheering and encouraging it; that destroys the incentives to hopeful labor and the inspirations of love and duty, and that confuses the ideas of justice and righteousness in sincere souls,—is not a good theology.

What is not useful in religion as well as in other spheres of human concern must ultimately be discarded. The power and glory of the blessed gospel is in the fact that it promotes the highest possible utilities. Its fulness is inexhaustible. The loving and obedient disciple knows where he gets his best hope, his richest resources, the light in which he sees light beyond the grave. He knows that it is not in some formulary that a theologian has constructed about the absolute God, but in the love of Christ which constrained him to repentance ; and, looking through the medium of that love, he is content to trust his Heavenly Father, to take the Master's hand and to live His life, about which there is no mistake.

So the great cause of joyfulness in religion is in our right relations with God. If sin does not burden, if the conscience does not accuse, if there is a consciousness of the nearness of God in Christ, a confidence of love that leads to holy and dutiful living, the result must be very gracious. I know how far the best are from realizing their ideal ; how, amid temptations and trials, there is stumbling and halting in the blessed way. I know, too, how, with all our blessings, it seems dark to us sometimes, and that sorrow seems to spring up rather than joy. But yet this is not the prevailing experience. We cannot wonder that it is so when we remember that our Lord Himself had His dark and bitter hours ; and what was good for Him is good for us. And, still, joy does dwell where His love abides, though there be seasons of pain and affliction. It is this sunshine on the heart that gives the best cheer, the great-

est consolation that we have. Where the spiritual life is vital, even sad experiences have blessed interpretation, and we see life, and its relationships and duties, through a medium that makes them sacred and beautiful. To look out on the world where God is ever working, and to feel that He who spins the starry systems along their glittering courses cares for us ; to see His love in the true and loving hearts around us ; to behold, in flower and bird and every beauteous thing, a ray of His transcendent loveliness ; to feel that all things — our lives, the generations, the great movement of the universe — are going on in the order of His will ; that love is the law of all, — this is an inspiring view, shedding gladness into the heart. And as we grow weary in our journey, little by little, and friends fall around us, and the grave is near, there is a sweet joy in being able to look beyond time, — seeing all through the dark valley the pathway of the Lord, who goes before us, and knowing that because He lives we shall live also. This religion of Christ is a religion of hope and consolation and joy, because it meets our human wants, and enables us to fulfil the ends of our creation. God requires of us only what is reasonable ; but in the love and following of the Master is the exemplification of the sweetest reasonableness, — the wisdom which is holy and heavenly, whose treasures are imperishable. Let us follow the divine methods, and make our lives harmonious with the gracious will and nature of God.

“But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” — MATTHEW iv. 4.

II.

THE BREAD OF LIFE.

AS man has a twofold nature,— the animal and the spiritual,— so his tendencies have two directions. The flesh and the spirit are always contending, in his experience, for the mastery. By yielding to the one come his nobleness and glory ; to the other, his degradation and shame. The gospel does not disparage any thing that contributes to his physical good. It is one of the glories of Christianity that it has vastly improved the material condition of the race. To feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and nurse the sick, and to be diligent in business, are among its prime obligations. Before man can rise to the higher levels of mental and spiritual culture, he must have put himself, to some extent, beyond the slavery of animal want. The missionary who goes with the word of life among the neglected and wretchedly destitute class in our cities, finds that he can accomplish little for their souls until he has relieved the present importunate distress of the body. Christ contemplated the whole man in His all-embracing regard, and so no interest that pertains to our humanity is ignored or underrated in the scope and sense of His revelations.

But while the gospel embraces both body and soul in its glorious provisions, while it stimulates industry and

furnishes man with the best inspirations to the improvement of all his gifts, it forbids him to rest, for his chief good, in aught that is external and perishing ; and while it sanctifies his common blessings, and promotes his enjoyment of them, it tells him plainly, “ You do not live by bread alone.” There is a higher life than can be supplied by earthly things : it is for the attainment of this life that your existence is valuable. Subdue the earth, gather the increase of productive endeavor, have houses and lands and merchandise, and an abundance of all things that are desirable below, if you can fairly secure them, but do not make them the supreme end of your being. Your true life is not gained, nor essentially nourished, by these things. For *that* consists in greatness of soul, moral purity, spiritual elevation, affinities with the infinite mind, holiness, love.

It was in the divine likeness that man was made, and to truly live it must be restored. If he is ambitious merely for the bread that perishes, the harvests of ten thousand acres do not supply the blessed life. He may count his buildings through streets of imperial magnificence, and welcome his ships from every sea, and still, in a profound sense, be poorer than the beggar at his gate. The sumptuous embellishments of his house do not beautify the inner man, unless there shines into it the beauty of the Lord. The very luxuries of his opulence may be savorless, if the spirit is smothered in sensuality and sloth. There is such a thing as mere existence, where the soul is treated with ignominious neglect, — starved, shut out from divine companionships, where every energy

of the individual is devoted to the earthly and perishable. But true life is not here. That must be begotten and fed from heavenly sources, and be blest with immortal fellowships.

If there is any thing pitiable, it is the struggle of a man to satisfy his whole nature on that which was only intended to be a means of mere existence, and of quenching in darkness the light that graciously shines into him, through a blind idolatry of Mammon. That he does not live by bread alone he is conscious, if he have any capacity of spiritual recognition ; and even though one's career and character are ever so unworthy, there exists some appreciation of what is nobler and better. Ordinarily the life of the spirit is acknowledged "the more excellent way." Take the nearest illustrations : You see the voluptuary cloying his appetite with sensual pleasures, and the poor man stinting his daily meal that he may provide suitable books for his studious child, and you approve, instinctively, this deliberate self-denial. You note this youth, giddy and vacant-brained with enervating dissipation and folly, and another, ravished with the delights of classic literature and pursuing the paths of scientific inquiry with a reverent and exultant tread, and you say the scholar has chosen the better part. You mark the hard, stingy, close-fisted worldling, turning unmoved from the pleas of pathetic suffering, and the generous soul that sheds the light of charity all around it, and you revolt at that one's meanness and rejoice in this one's magnanimity. And so, too, when you have been conscious that some true heart was getting hope and strength through

your example ; or when by the ocean or on the mountain-top the splendors of the visible creation flowed into you, and in the great tide of refreshment that consecrated the hour you were lifted to a consciousness of a rarer fellowship and a more transcendent experience ; or when, through strong sympathy with bitter woe, you conquered selfishness and pain in helping a struggling and smitten life to peace,—you learned a more exquisite felicity, you lived a higher life than any that you found in gross enjoyment, or even in successful transactions in the marts of men.

Yes, that life is highest which reaches furthest into the infinite Love, to whose consciousness are made the purest revelations, whose joys spring out of unsullied affections, whose sensibilities are most heavenly tempered, and which holds divine truth in the firmest grasp.

Man may exist by the mere gratification of his lower nature, but he truly lives only by the word of God. And God speaks to him in all ways in which His infinite glory and character and will are manifested and discovered. In one way it is through His works. “For day unto day uttereth speech” of Him, “and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” Nature is His thought made visible. In the pictured glories of morning and evening, the pomp of seasons, the landscape’s magnificence, the majestic harmony of the Cosmos, are manifold expressions, to man, of a divine intelligence. It is meant that he should read the stupendous lesson that is written all over the green earth and the wondrous sky, that the

loveliness of created things should refresh him ; that he should find in the order and uses and beauty of the universe something to enlarge and uplift his nature, and transmit an impression of the All-creating, All-embracing Love to his exultant heart. Accept these tokens of wisdom and goodness and power, taste the benediction that is shed forth in suns and seas, let the meaning of these wonderful forms and hues and melodies pass into your being, and you get a gracious nourishment and rest. “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.”

And so, too, He speaks in all that He inspires His children to do in harmony with His laws, in illustration of His boundless beneficence, in the spirit of His divine Son. All genuine science, all fair creations of ennobling art, all imperishable songs born in the vision of His love, all the rapt and adoring emotion that music interprets and breathes through her mystic lips, all deeds of beautiful valor and blessed sacrifice done in faith and struggling, and in the upward reach of the winged soul, all the gifts imparted by true prophetic hearts, by their sweet utterances and meek labors and holy martyrdoms,—whatever is sent to feed and solace and quicken the immortal nature,—all this is the language of the Lord to man. For the power to speak and do and suffer and conquer is from above. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.” He would have us live His life, and

so all that is suited to nourish it flows from Him in the wonderful channels through which the soul is touched and enlightened, and made strong. All true interpreters of His goodness are prophets to the soul. Every word that thrills with His benignity is sent from His heart. All sights where His glory is disclosed are utterances of His perfect thought. He feeds His adoring creatures in the radiance of His firmament, in the music of His universe, in the sympathies of the love that He puts into noble hearts, in the knowledge that shows man to himself, and teaches his uses and duties and destiny.

It is in the Holy Scriptures, of course, that He speaks most directly and clearly, and with the most august and commanding emphasis, and still in no tone discordant with the language of His works. Here are given the enduring portraiture of His amazing condescension and grace, the epitomes of His love, the verities of His infinite salvation. In the gospel of the Lord Jesus are summed up and concentrated the surpassing truths of life. "For in these last days," says the Apostle, "He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has made heir of all things, by whom He created the worlds, who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." It is, then, chiefly in the disclosure of Himself in Christ that we have the true life for the soul, the bread from heaven, the unwasting, divine nourishment in which is holiness, beatification, joy. And so the written word penned by men, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is life-giving and sustaining, because through it the spiritual man

comes in contact with the Infinite, learns the mysteries of heavenly wisdom, feeds on the uncreated Love ; in a word, because it discloses the Life Christ Jesus to the heart. It is the medium through which God speaks to the soul, shines in upon it, awakens its high susceptibilities, and replenishes it with divine supplies.

Hence the glory and preciousness of the written word are in its being the vessel of such glorious treasures, the key that opens up the knowledge and the joy of God. It is the spirit, not the letter, that makes its transcendent value. It may be obscured by superstition, dogmatism, ecclesiasticism, the conventionalities of sect and system. Its sacred voices may be drowned or disguised by bigotry, priestcraft, intolerance, sensuality, and the pride of knowledge. In the hands of Pharisaic and legal righteousness it may yield no quickening, life-giving food. But still it points the way to it. It unfolds the source of it. It bears the message of it to those who will hear. There, in the golden volume, the most practical questions of our existence are answered, the highest possible type of character and living delineated, human destiny described, and life and immortality brought to light. There can be nothing more intensely practical than the truth which it is its province to impart ; and it is getting the deep meanings of the divine love, the sense of God with man, the enlightening of the true Light, the strength that is breathed into the heart, assured of forgiven sin and the boundless and present sympathy of the Lord, that makes the word of God the life of man,—that makes him live. For he truly lives, as he feels that he can con-

quer the evil that besets him, as he rises up to duty in the inspiration of a great hope, as he knows the quickening of a love larger and richer than his dream, as his being takes hold of a certainty of blessedness, surviving suns and years, as he is led to a peace of heart that, resting on the divine heart, is pure and strong. He lives in the ardors of his better aspirations, in the insights of a clearer and more reverent intelligence, in the affinities of holier, sweeter affections, as the discords of sin die in the inflowing of the heavenly harmonies. Every word of God inspires and feeds this life, however it is transmitted, however brought to the spiritual intelligence.

And he interprets best the sacred volume who brings the sweetest, most convincing sense of Christ to the heart, who helps the soul to grasp in most affectionate embrace the everlasting Goodness which delights to renew and comfort and save. It is possible that a gracious instruction may come in the lovely innocence of a child, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. It may come in the holy example of a sainted friend, winning you to ways of virtue. It may come in the strong sympathies of one who takes you in the arms of a prevailing faith clear to the heart of Jesus ; for in these ways and the like the spirit of goodness reaches you.

So, on the other hand, the gracious word may not come to you in pages of learned dissertation, in ponderous discourses, musty with an antiquated scholasticism. God speaks *now*, and whatever startles your conscience into vigorous exercise, whatever flashes light to reveal

His love, or shows yourself to yourself so as to impel you to the cross, or helps you carry cheerfully your load, and to live patiently and purely, as seeing Him who is invisible, while you wait for the glory that shall be revealed, is from Him.

As respects the matter of preaching, there must necessarily be a great variety of it, both in the topics presented and in the manner of their treatment, to say nothing of its degrees of excellence. But where there is a supreme intent to benefit the soul, where there is the earnestness that springs from profound conviction, let none censure. However noble and gracious the utterance, not all who listen will hear with the same ears, not all will be fed alike, not all will equally respond to the voice that appeals to the inward and the eternal. But so long as the good news is proclaimed, though in different keys, it shall not be in vain. As in sacred music there are many different tunes that inspire or express devotion, so preaching may be marked by great variety and still achieve a blessed end. It is the perfunctory performance — the vain repetition of sacred phrases and formulas without the awful sense of the divineness of what ministers to souls — that falls dead. While nothing that truly instructs in what is of human utility, or appeals to the spiritual sense with a view of moral improvement, is to be undervalued, that preaching is to be most prized which is most powerful to beget and nourish the divine love, and hence the divine life. Man needs something more for his spiritual growth than solemn cautions, negations, the knowledge of penalties, the recital of

facts relating to his ordinary worldly interests. He preaches best who makes divine realities most impressive to human consciousness. We need frequent upliftings to clearer and purer atmospheres, profound stirrings of soul, the sweet and holy impulses that are given by a sense of the nearness, yea, the presence of God. To advance toward the higher stature of the perfect man, to ripen in heavenly graces, is the Christian's ambition. Whatever the variety of our experience or growth or knowledge may be, we need such a contact with Christ as shall enable us to follow joyfully His blessed steps. Enough all the while is tempting us astray, is blinding us to the imperishable good, is clogging the free, true movement of the heavenward life. Just as the physical man requires daily food, that he maintain his vigor, so does the immortal nature its divine supplies. The eagerness with which you hear what ministers to the higher life will be measured by the sincerity of your desire to have your life hid with Christ in God.

In all your bestments and woes, in all your struggles and hopes, and questionings and fears, you can surely tell whether any thing vital and helpful reaches you from lips that speak of sacred things. You know, indeed, when the quickening word comes to your hungry soul. You know what makes you stronger to bear and to toil on. You know what makes the horizon of life brighter, and sin more hateful, and holiness more attractive, and the invisible glory more real. There is a divine communication here. The Holy Spirit has shone on the dark letter, has imparted a gracious message, has sent

the healing comfort, and lifted up the hands that hung down, and strengthened the feeble knees. Life has come, for the spirit of life is there. And you get no good from ministration, from prayer, or pulpit, or service, unless that Holy Spirit convey something vital to your spiritual sense. It is the heavenly bread that we hunger for, if there is any life in us. We want the assurance of the divine sympathy, the refreshments and grace of the divine love. We want to get the victory over our weaknesses and fears and sins, and the assaulting evils that hedge us round. It is larger life—the freedom of higher affections, clearer insight, a mightier force of the obedient will, a purer heart, and a closer fellowship with the Lord of love and life—that we desire. Give us some word throbbing with the meanings of God, O preacher of the good news! Bring not for me the husks of dogma and the vague tradition of things sacred. Utter not for me the cant of ecclesiastical routine, of sect, and shibboleth, and ism. Away with the clatter of profitless controversy, and the dead effigies of sacerdotal pretence and trickery and gaud! It is a word from God that I want,—a word that shall inspire my hope, and shame my meanness, and smite away my conceit, and touch me with the awful joy of a divine Deliverer and an infinite Friend. I am set amid a strange universe; I am crowded with spiritual foes; I shudder at the brooding mystery of life and death; I would escape the thralls and the blight of sin; I hunger for the imperishable good, for light, and the blessedness of the skies. Speak to me out of the infinite measures of grace and power; show

me how I may know God and live. Ah! it is shown in Him, who came down to us in the brightness of the Father's glory, who lived and suffered and died, and rose triumphant to the fruitions of the Godhead, our Saviour, Lord, and Life. "He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly."

This is the significance of His gospel. The word in its fulness and manifold applications is for us living men in the living present. We are not to hear it, to read it, to ponder it, as something which was merely true once, as if the gifts of God and the disclosures of His grace pertained only to the men and the generations that are gone. He is a living God, an unchangeable God, and His word, in all its varied tones of cheer and inspiration and life, is to us to-day, in our cares and sins and troubles and infirmities. What dried the tears of the afflicted, and gave heroic endurance to believers of old, can do the same for us. What was true for those who walked with God centuries ago, may be true for His children now. If you will but hear, there is a gracious message for you that your deepest nature can understand.

Yes, there is a word of comfort to you, O soul groping in the desolation of your strange bereavement; and hope for you, weary one, though you grow faint in your rough pilgrimage; and peace to you, who, feeling the hurt and shame of sin, long for deliverance; and victory to you all, who rest on the mighty heart that feels with you, and imparts the pulsations of its glorious life. God is with us — Emmanuel — the Lord our righteousness. To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. And

while ever looking to Him as the author and finisher of your faith, give an eager ear to all that has the savor of His spirit. Refuse no life-giving truth because it bears not the label of some favorite name. Whatever is food for the immortal life, accept as from above. There is but one fountain of good. The Spirit has a variety of administrations, but there is the same Lord. Seek the bread that does not perish. "Life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment." Every word of God is nourishing to the soul. But our Lord is the Eternal Word,—the true bread that cometh down from heaven.

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

MATTHEW iii. 3.

“The Lord is at hand.”

PHILIPPIANS iv. 5.

III.

PREPARATION FOR A HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

THE Christmas season is close at hand, and our hearts naturally run forward to its sacred meanings and joys. There are few, indeed, in a Christian land who do not think of it with a peculiar interest; for whatever men's opinions or lives may be, there is a light about Christmas of an unwonted lustre, and associations gather there that touch a tender place, if there is one left in the heart. But that the blessed time may be what it ought to be to us, that it may be truly a season of holy joy, there is need that we be duly prepared for it. So glorious a reality as Christ in our midst, as the appearing in the flesh of the Lord of Light, as the birth among us of the divine child,—the fact of Emmanuel,—cannot be appreciated and enjoyed, as is meet, unless we are brought to a proper state to see the glory of the heavenly manifestation, and to receive the wondrous grace of the gift of God. All that is most excellent in the wide scope of life's possibilities, all that is most precious in hopes that survive time and death, are intimately connected with Him whose nativity was ushered in by the angelic strain, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men." To be blind to the sublime disclosure of His love, to be

unmoved by the displays of His relationship to us, and all that fidelity to such a condition imposed and illustrated, of course hinders any such welcome of His appearing as shall insure an effectual benefit and an inspiring joy. It is for us to put ourselves in the best attitudes for beholding His glory, in the best frame for appreciating His divine purpose and character, and for receiving the significance of the good news which has filled the earth with such a blessed light. We are to make ready for such a reception of Him as shall be refreshing to our hopes, as shall be gloriously inspiring and invigorating to our lives. It is impossible to leap from a carnal and earthly state into the blessed participation of Christmas joy,—impossible to grasp the real meaning of Christ with men, if the sensual, selfish, uncharitable spirit reigns in us. Christ is coming. He comes as a babe into the world ; bringing all that is innocent, pure, and lovely to our firesides and homes. He comes to walk with us as a friend in the darkest and brightest ways with sympathy and support and cheer. He comes to lead us graciously to our Father ; taking the curse of our sins, and suffering for our offences. He comes giving hope and consolation to the weary ones ; conquering death, shining in upon life with a glory of love that makes time and eternity radiant, and standing the personal brother of every soul that will receive Him. It is something exceedingly great and beautiful to have such a visitor,—to be honored with such a guest. So, I say, to realize what our privilege is, to accept our great blessing, it is essential

that we be found in a state of readiness. We are to prepare for His appearing.

You all know with what an interest you prepare for the reception of a friend whom you highly honor and love and revere. You look forward to the visit with happy thoughts, and the expected pleasure gives interest to all that you do in the plans and preparations for the loved and welcome guest. As you arrange the room for the visitor, you think, "What will be most suitable and agreeable; what will make the hours of rest and leisure most interesting; what will insure the happiest stay?" So you make provision for the table that will be most palatable; you put away whatever you deem offensive; you arrange your affairs so that you can give your time to the pleasant fellowship that is to be renewed. In deciding upon entertainments that will signalize the occasion, in setting the house in order, in placing books here and flowers there, and settling all the little conveniences, you consult the taste of your friend; and there is a peculiar kind of enjoyment in the very act of doing what you know is so highly deserved, and which will be so thoroughly appreciated.

Now, for a truly "Happy Christmas" a similar preparation must be made, but made in the heart and life. The Christmas anthem is loud, with strains of peace and good-will. The manger of Bethlehem is a picture unshadowed by the frowns of malice and revenge. All the suggestions there are of condescension, mercy, love. No one is prepared for a happy Christmas who carries grudges, envies, ill-will, hatred in his heart.

The whole career of Christ on earth is an illustration of that patience which is never disheartened, of love that suffers long and is kind, that is easy to be entreated, and that bears all things in its purpose to save. In Him is the pattern of forgiveness and mercy. "Blessed are the peace-makers," He says. "Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful." The bitter and revengeful spirit cannot know Him. And yet how in their strifes and disputes, their selfishness and their ambitions, this evil spirit is engendered among men. How many foully suspect each other, cherish malignant antipathies, hate each other. How many let some slights or affronts fester into dark hostilities, and so imbitter their very souls. How many stand apart through real or fancied unkindness who ought to be friends. There are those who profess to be followers of the lowly and forgiving Jesus, who year after year maintain an unforgiving temper, and who fail to make any advances to heal old breaches of confidence and regard. Now what can be more unlovely than such a spirit,—more discordant with the mind of Christ? With such a disposition there can be no hearty enjoyment of the large, generous, forgiving mind of the Lord. None who keep hatred in their hearts, who nourish grudges and enmities, can get into the atmosphere of Christ's charity. They are unhappy with all their affected pride and coldness and disdain. The sore aches within, and they know that the animosity which they cherish towards others reacts painfully upon themselves. To enjoy the sweetness of Christmas, they must put away their ill-will. Their

hands must be held out in forgiveness. They must look into the faces of men as upon brothers. They must bury their hatreds as something offensive to Heaven. Then are they prepared to see better the sympathy of the Lord that envelops all mankind. Then are they brought where the looks of the young child show the trust, the holy peace, the engaging beauty of love. Let a man get rid of the bad feeling that so worries and irritates him, let him find again the place that he once had with his friend who was alienated from him, let him feel that there is no soul on earth to whom he does not wish well, let him fairly rejoice in all the happiness that he sees in the lives of his fellows, who have been more fortunate in a worldly point than he has, and he sees the Christmas light falling with wonderful sweetness all over the earth. Enemies seem to be reconciled. Friends that stood apart seem running together. Hands that were raised to strike clasp in love. The vipers of prejudice and malice seem gliding away to the pit. Something inexpressibly lovely beams all over the ways of men. For such a one beholds the infinite mercy of Heaven in the disclosure of Christ. The whole air of Christmas is tender and pure and clear and musical with the spirit of compassion. There must then be a forgiving spirit to appreciate the blessed joys of the nativity.

Akin to this, as a preparation for the enjoyment of the sacred time, is practical benevolence. God's great gift to us, "Unto us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Emmanuel," is the reality

that we celebrate. The bright associations of the day are of giving,—giving out of tenderness and sympathy, giving out of love and a sense of gratitude, giving through sacrifice in the strong confidence of bringing some pleasure to a human heart. In the glorious illustration of the divine love we take our cue in making some testimony of interest in those who are dear to us. But the spirit that apprehends Christmas most fully goes beyond mere family regard. It must pass the limit of personal friendship. It must give something, where it can, to make want less bitter and affliction less keen. If there is a heart whose wounds you have any power to staunch, if there is penury that you might relieve, if there is a loneliness of age and suffering that you might irradiate, if there is a single needy and deserving one whose days you might cheer by something from your sympathy and your possessions, then it is for you to do it in the spirit of Him who condescended to your mortal infirmities, and who bore, out of His great love for you, an infinite sorrow. If there is a season of the whole year when one can be touched by human woes and made to respond to the cry of distress, it is surely at the time when heaven and earth are jubilant with the news of the Messiah's birth. Go forth to the lowly abode of the needy with the aid that shall make gladness, at least for a day; send your gift abroad where you know there is famine and almost despair; sustain by your voice and benefaction the pleading cause of your own parish; cheer some sinking mind that has nobly labored, yet has failed to be recognized or encour-

aged ; share your comforts and luxuries with one unused to human sympathy, yet is perishing for relief ; do something that shall illustrate the spirit of sacrifice and brotherhood,—and you shall realize a more glorious meaning of Christ with men. There shall be more wonderful beauty in the face of the infant Jesus. A holier radiance shall fall, not only over the Judean landscape, but all over the earth wherever there is a human heart. The Lord shall seem nearer in your fellowship with man, in your glow of sympathy, in the elasticity of spirit glad in doing good, in the participation that you have with that charity that flows out of the heart of God. You shall more fully understand the motive and the methods of grace, and a better hope shall glow, as you look abroad, in every human home. Christmas has a blessed cheer to those who serve ; and if you would have it bright with an uncommon glory, imitate your Lord. Go, as He did, on errands of mercy ; suffer something, if need be, for a benevolent cause ; feel that you are useful in your day and place ; that you are not living merely for yourself, that you have an interest in all that makes man better and happier ; actually impart a gift where there is a strong necessity, — and the season shall have an unwonted preciousness. If we do not secure its great blessings, it is because we do not make ready for them. With the pulse of charity bounding high, with a generosity that casts rich gifts on the altar, with a self-forgetfulness elate with the new hope that dawns in gloomy homes and rough ways, Christmas shall be gloriously glad.

But still further, to prepare for a joyful Christmas a pure heart is necessary. When you make ready for your honored friend, you are careful that the room provided for your guest shall be peculiarly inviting. Not only would you have it cleanly and fair, but all its suggestions pleasant. You arrange the furniture, the books, and pictures, and flowers,—every thing, so that an air of sweetness may prevail. So in preparing for the greater guest, the divine visitor, with what diligence should one eliminate from his mind all that is offensive to pure eyes. With what scrupulous care should he search his conscience that sin be not entertained. How critically should he consider his life in the light of duty and privilege. How pure and clean should he seek to have his heart in the presence of the Holy One. With what openness, with what sincerity, with what reverence and love should he make ready to welcome the Lord. But to do this he cannot be idle and unconcerned. He cannot be neglectful and inconsiderate. It will not do for him to think that all in a moment, in the confusion of his worldly engagements, in his material absorption, in his lust of carnal pleasures, in his greediness for gain, he can turn without effort and behold the Lord in His nearness and excellence and surpassing grace, and rejoice in Him with exceeding joy. No. For this great blessing the spiritual eye must have its films removed. There must be opened within the soul ample space for the heavenly guest. The welcome must be prepared. And this cannot be done without self-denial and self-consecration; cannot be done unless the bonds of sin

are broken and the hunger for righteousness is begotten. There must be prayer as a habit of life. A devout frame must be cultivated that loves to meditate on what is divine. There must be driven from the heart the imps of unbelief and sensuality and pride and vain desire. The glorious things that are promised must be dear, and so dear that they seem like realities in the strong apprehensions of faith. There must be a consciousness of that which is imperishable, and life must be flung steadfastly upon God amid temptation and trial. Let one thus find freedom in the liberty of a son in the kingdom of grace ; let him be animated with holy ambitions ; let him feel that his way is heavenward, and that the evil of his nature is more and more purged away by the Sanctifier, as he lives in the refreshing sense of heavenly things,— and Christmas shall be radiant and sweet with an inexpressible delight. Then he shall look on the cradle of the Holy Child with eyes that see far into the charity of Heaven. The earth shall blossom and sing in the shining of the sun of righteousness. All over time and the ages and eternity shall gleam the hopes of a heavenly fruition. The strains of angel anthems are swelled by his own song of rejoicing.

It is our own fault if Christmas does not bring to us a blessed cheer. But the same preparation which will insure an inspiring joy in the holy festival is needed to make life satisfying and triumphant. There are no methods of successful living equal to those set forth in the gospel. Our gains will be only temporary, our pleasures deceitful, our lives a failure, unless we

follow the counsels of infinite wisdom, and are partakers of the mind of the Master. With the thralls of sin broken, with the spiritual sense keen and alert, with love our controlling principle, with the graces of the Spirit the supreme treasures of the soul, the man is sure of a glorious harvest. Not surer do the blossoms of spring come up in the favoring soil and climate than does joy spring out of the obedient and consecrated heart. Going forth among men with a strong friendship for virtue, with a charity that endures and forgives, with generosities that shed light and help where there is sore need, with a spirit that lives in communion with holy things, with a faith that realizes the divine nearness and benignity, you are gathering something all the while that is precious and everlasting. In what you do to make others better and happier, you are yourself enriched. As you show more of the pure, forgiving, blameless mind of the Lord, you are enabled to see more of His excellence. The light that shines out of your magnanimity, your fidelities to truth and honor, your sacrifices and faith, make your own way clearer to the infinite good. By your devotion, your integrity, your large-hearted sympathy with the cause of humanity, you are more and more identified with Him who gave Himself for us. And so your fellowship is closer with Him, and the invisible kingdom is the chief reality in which you rejoice. Preparing well for the appreciation and enjoyment of Christmas is preparing well for a faithful service of the Lord. And this is to be continued from day to day while life endures. But there is an advan-

tage in realizing vividly the wonderful measures of the divine good-will, in an experience which shall quicken every attribute of the soul to vigorous activity. As he who from some high elevation looking forth over the glorious landscape appreciates better its loveliness than he could by standing down amid the fogs of the valley before the sun dispelled them, so he who is lifted in the ardors of love and duty to the high places of spiritual observation sees more that charms his heart and encourages him to a faithful discipleship. Make your Christmas what it should be by a forgiving temper, by works of charity, by a purity of heart in which the Holy Spirit has His abode, and in the inspirations of your joy you shall be set forward with swifter impulse in the way of life. The horizon of Christian privilege shall enlarge. Your burdens shall be lighter, humanity shall be dearer, life shall have higher significance, you shall carry forward the sweet thought of Christ with men into your work and trials, and a holier atmosphere shall ensphere your soul. Our hindrance is our worldliness and our unbelief. Alas for blind eyes and hard hearts, and ambitions that seek simply what is earthy and perish ing! Alas for our conceit of self and unrepented sin, that besets and cripples us! We must break these bonds of evil sovereignty, and find the blessed liberty of love. We must put on the garments of holiness that we may give due welcome to the Lord. We must be like the wise virgins, ready in heart for the Redeemer's coming. The Lord is at hand.

“The babe lying in a manger.”

LUKE ii. 16.

IV.

THE BABE LYING IN A MANGER.

THE picture that these words suggest is a very humble one, and yet it has in its relations and significance a grandeur and glory that dwarf all other events of time. An ordinary stable of an oriental hostelry, a youthful couple in plain attire, and a young child cradled in a manger,—nothing to the casual beholder but indications of uninfluential position, lowly pursuits, poverty, a cheerless life; and yet here were the treasures of riches, power, knowledge, that could make the world glorious. That manger contained the world's life and hope. That infant was to conquer the nations and kingdoms of the whole earth. From that shed was to go a light in which an erring and wretched race could find the way to God. That babe had the key to all human hearts. Before Him royalty was to lay its crowns, and learning its treasures, and wealth its precious substance, and ambition its lordliest trophies. His lips were to utter truths that should break the power of tyranny and caste, and dispel the mists of superstition. On His heart were to be laid the burdens of innumerable sorrows. Up to His face were to look the myriads who hunger for help and consolation. From those veins now throbbing with infantile life was to flow

the blood of an all-sufficient sacrifice. Surely God has visited His people. Glad tidings of great joy have come. The light to lighten the Gentiles has dawned. The promise to the fathers is fulfilled. This child is Emmanuel,—God with us. And the miracle of His birth is only the preliminary of the miracle that has been wrought, and is ever being wrought, by His glorious gospel. For this gospel is verily the power of God. Its fundamental principle is love. It starts in humiliation, poverty, apparent weakness. It vindicates its divineness and power in sacrifice. It wins by giving. It conquers by dying. Could a clearer testimony of its intention to reach to the lowest conditions of society be given than by the Prince of Peace in the manger? Could there be a more thorough divestment of what the world regards as its means of success and honor than this child in His weakness, poverty, destitution of influential relations and friends?

But here are the symbols of its strength and success and sovereignty. The Lord of Life assumes this human condition. The Divine is incarnate in the form of a servant. There are humiliation, lowly labors, sacrifice. There is love pure and perfect in its gifts and ministries. There is an absence of material instrumentalities, of splendid state and circumstance, a giving away of self, a dying for man. This is the fact briefly of Christianity. Its history begins in the stable at Bethlehem. Its founder wanders throughout His native country poor and homeless. He dies as a malefactor. A few fishermen proclaim the principles which He taught them.

Men who had given up the world, and who had no credentials of authority but their call to promulgate the gospel, go about from land to land preaching a crucified and risen Saviour. They bring no testimonials from royal personages. They make no boast of distinguished erudition. They appeal to no ancestral influence. They get no support from military commanders or civic dignitaries. They have the prestige of no illustrious services. They can make no show of worldly affluence or honors. What they say conflicts with the pride and passions and appetites of man. Their style of living is an affront to the popular taste and ambitions. Their doctrines are an assault on polytheistic superstitions and philosophic conceit. The principles that they inculcate sap the foundations of imperialism and eat away the fetters of slavery. All that the predominant popular opinion deems desirable is accounted by them as unprofitable and vain. What men greedily seek they condemn. The pleasures, the amusements, the ostentation, the power, the philosophy, the governments, the caste, the official station of the world,— all are in collision with this gospel. Society had no sympathy with them, its ministers. Cæsarism was hostile to them. Human learning was offended at them. The appetites of men could not tolerate their spirituality and austerities. What did they have with which to cope with all the elements of a corrupt and mighty world? What could inspire in them a courage sufficient to prosecute their hazardous mission? What resources did they possess adequate to their sublime venture? Ah! it was because

they had the spirit of this Master that they went forth and sowed the good seed of the divine word. Yet still it was out of poverty, human weakness, humility, sacrifice, brotherhood, love, that they continued to minister.

And what was the result? Why, Christianity gradually permeated society by its light. Power became docile. Wealth opened its coffers to its uses. Philosophy revised its doctrines or abandoned them. Heathenism burned its idols. Sensualism crucified its lusts. Learning became meek and lowly in heart. The chains of slavery fell asunder. The amphitheatres of brutal pastimes were dismantled. A new code of morals took the place of the old. A new inspiration animated the industries of men. Their ambitions took new channels. Human thinking and living were converted. This Christianity—which was so despised in its servants, whose earthy estate was so poor, which was so destitute of the accepted symbols and circumstance of success—marched forward and entered the heart and brain of the civilized world. It took possession of the seats of learning. It overthrew the palaces of licentious revelry. It wielded the sceptre of emperors, unlocked the prisons of despotism, made gardens of desert places, filled the earth with the blossoms of an immortal hope and the odors of a divine charity. From a despised sect, that were cast out of synagogues and hunted by military officials, the church became a great company, controlling the thought and industries, if not the legislation, of the world. It filled the Orient with its temples. It made the great cities

Antioch, Corinth, Alexandria, Carthage, Ephesus, Constantinople, centres of its light and power. It mounted the throne of the Cæsars and made imperial Rome the dispenser of its gospel. And so north and south along the shores of Africa, and to Gaul and Scandinavia and Britain, the truth planted its standards, and the gospel won noble and peasant, king and serf, till its symbols were acknowledged and nations vitalized by its life. Here is a great fact which no gainsayer can deny. Out of that word proclaimed by the Galilean peasant, His life and death, rose this great organized Christian body, containing the virtues, the culture, the learning, the sovereignty of the civilized world. In its power, I repeat, old customs died, old superstitions were abolished, old wrongs and abominations were extirpated, old enmities and tyrannies and cruelties ceased. The thought, the heart, the life of the leaders of society, government, art, learning, religion, were converted. A new impulse was given to the race. There was a regeneration of hope, of affections, of aim, of work, of life itself. Here is the standing miracle. The transformations of mankind, the higher direction of their civilization, the scope of their charity, the spirit of their laws, the safeguards of their liberties, the sanctities of their homes, the institutions that illustrate the presence of a true brotherhood and the recognition of a heavenly fatherhood, all, indeed, that is sweetest and best in the possession of the race,—show the potency of that divine element which Christ introduced into the world. What to human eyes seemed weak, destitute of powerful resources, despised

from its lack of worldly ostentation and patronage, became mighty, through God, to the dominion of the world. The colossal systems of error ; the philosophies and polytheisms of the world, with all their prestige ; the evils that seemed throned on invincible power,— could not stand before the truth of the Galilean. Love, humility, purity, sacrifice, were mightier than armed legions and the monstrous iniquities of heathenism. Let those who quibble and dispute about the miraculous advent of Christ explain the facts of a Christianity which contains the very kernel of the world's good, before they turn away in scornful unbelief. Here is a miracle illustrated before our very eyes. Instead of our bowing in temples of a pure religion to-day, instead of the comfort of Christian homes, instead of our glorious liberties and the opportunities that invite our successful effort on every hand, why are we not crushed by an irresponsible despotism, enveloped in the darkness of barbaric ignorance ? Why are we not now cringing before miserable idols, or casting our children to horrid monsters, or exhausting and embittering life by foolish mortifications, or trying to kill every sweet and true instinct of our souls, in the hope of conciliating some imaginary god ? Why are we not the dupes of some powerful impostor, cheated, harried, tormented, with no hope and no redress ? It is because of the glorious gospel of Christ actualized on earth. It is because Christmas is the great fact in the history of the race ; because God is with us,— Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. The Christian ages are the best

vindicator of the claims of the Messiah. All that is written in the love and sacrifice and nobilities of men ; the great deeds that embalm the years, the spirit that has made sweet the homes and lives of mankind,—all this is but a page of the Christianity that was born with the Prince of Peace. The race has been conserved by it. What is fairest and best and most gracious on earth has been inspired by it. There is not a principle that is most valuable in our governments, not a sentiment that is most precious in our literature and hearts, but is saturated with its grace. The affections that are sacred, the activities that are benign and helpful, all get their light and beauty and vitality from this wondrous child. Trace up to their fountain whatever gives the richest flavor to your life, and you will find that it is associated with the great reality which we celebrate to-day. God has disclosed His good-will to men. In the most affecting and gracious manner possible He has visited us. The way of blessed life He has made known, and the principles that insure our everlasting good. Christ a babe in swaddling-clothes, Christ conquering the tempter, Christ making bright the marriage festival and bringing comfort to the house of mourning, Christ healing the sick and the insane, shedding His sympathy into homes of poverty and wretchedness, planting the seeds of new life in souls that were stained and darkened, pointing the heart to the treasures of an everlasting blessedness, taking unto Himself the sins and sorrows of a world, and putting death and hell under

His feet in His resurrection triumph,—in all this humiliation and mercy and sacrifice and gift we have an attestation of the divine power and charity which demonstrates the sublime benignity of the gospel. We can ask nothing more or better to assure us of the glorious meaning and destiny of life, and the resources of its elevation and blessedness. A sympathizing Saviour, a suffering Saviour, a redeeming Saviour; a Saviour victorious over sin and sorrow and death; a Saviour showing the likeness of God, and the power of God, and the way to God, and the joy of God; a Saviour entering in to our humanity, bearing our burdens, tasting our woes, expiating our offences, and pouring the tides of His renewing and refreshing love into our hearts,—this is what Christmas tells us, this is the inspiration of our rejoicing.

And so the story never grows old from age to age, never ceases to have the charm and the sweetness that it had to our youthful hearts. No tone of the angels' anthem in the skies of Bethlehem fades as the years go on. No lustre of the star that hung over the "place where the young child was" wanes, however dark our night. The voice that whispered to so many "thy sins be forgiven thee," that called so many to better and happier paths, that caused the broken-hearted to forget their woes in the coming of an immortal joy, that bade nature's turbulence subside, and in the hour of sacrificial agony said "it is finished,"—that voice comes to us as tender, as convincing, as divine, with its healing grace

and comforting balm, as to the myriads who have heard it and rejoiced. And we, too, rejoice ; for to us a child is born, to us a son is given, the dayspring from on high has visited us. Yes, the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings. Christ comes to our homes and hearts, to our lonely and sorrowing paths, to our festive scenes and toilsome ways ; comes to awake the filial love to our Father who is in heaven, to draw our feet upward to the heavenly life, to plant immortal flowers in our desert places, and make strong our hands for a holy service ; comes to shed upon life the cheer of immortal friendships and imperishable hopes, to sweeten our years with the odors of His paradise, and to enrich us with the graces of His own loving and untainted spirit. We can welcome Him to-day as our elder brother, as our truest friend, as our sympathizing high priest, as the light of our hearts and habitations, as the life in which our own being is renewed, ennobled, made strong. We can stand around His cradle and pour out our offerings of gratitude and praise ; we can gather around Him to hear the words of life and witness the wonders of His love. We can touch the hem of His garment : yes, feel the pulses of His loving heart in the sincerity of a faith that hungers for purity and peace. All that is gracious in His benignant ministry and glorious disclosures we can appropriate to our various and peculiar needs. For He is our Lord and the Shepherd of our souls. As we gather again on the return of this joyous festival to celebrate the advent of the wonderful child, what an appeal comes

to us from all that is most sacred in the annals of our experience, what associations group around this divine reality, what pictures rise on the memory that are hallowed by undying affections. Out of remote childhood troop the fair visions that made the early years radiant. From the hearth-sides of home come voices full of the tender music of infancy and parental affection and endearment. Old pleasures shed their perfumes that linger around places holy and fair to hearts that do not forget. We catch the glow that warmed the household atmospheres of years ago, when time had dealt less roughly with us ; and from the altars of the church, from the green garlands and balsamic boughs that symbolize the Christmas cheer, from the precious hymns and prayers of the sanctuary and its sweet communion, there come remembrances of joys that cannot die. And to-day there is the same brightness to Christmas as in the years long gone ; and though we miss the voices and smiles of some who were dear, and find a place vacant at the Christmas board, we know that in a better clime than this the beloved are waiting for us, where no tears dim their sight of the Redeemer. Dear friends, the closer we take Him to our hearts the keener shall be our enjoyment of our daily blessings and the brighter shall be the hope that shines beyond these scenes of change and trial. We cannot gather too much of the Christian spirit,—the spirit of forbearance and peace and sacrifice, the spirit of brotherhood and charity, the spirit of purity and devotion to Him through

whom come all that makes the season precious and all that renders life noble and useful and true. The best mood that we catch to-day in our church and homes ought to be the prevailing one of our lives. I can wish you nothing better than such a union with Christ as that the mind that was in Him be found within you.

“And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” — LUKE ii. 49.

V.

THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

IT was the custom for Mary and Joseph once a year, at the feast of the Passover, to go up to Jerusalem to attend the religious services that were celebrated there ; and it appears that, when the child Jesus was twelve years old, they took Him with them, for the first time since His presentation in the temple while an infant. Nazareth was the residence of the holy family, and here, amid the charming loveliness of the place, the divine child was reared. The village reposed in the south-western corner of a beautiful valley enclosed by fifteen hills of gently rounded summits, one of which, rising several hundred feet above the town, commands a landscape of enchanting magnificence. “Westward, clearly defined against the blue waters of the Mediterranean, rises Mount Carmel. To the north gleams the white peak of Mount Hermon. Looking eastward, between the bald top of Tabor and little Hermon, the eye rests on the fair valley of the Jordan and the highlands of Perea beyond ; while southward spreads the fertile and historic plain of Jezreel to the solemn mountains of Samaria and Gilboa.” Nestling amid vineyards, fig-trees, and hedges of prickly pear, with its gardens and orchards and fruitful suburbs, the village possessed

attractions which time has failed to destroy. The place was fair, indeed, but its brightest flower was the wonderful child. We cannot think of it without associating the babe and His tender years and unfolding loveliness with all that makes it interesting. The reverent desire has often been expressed for some glimpse into that home where the holy family dwelt in the beautiful seclusion of Nazareth. We can imagine the infant growing up there in the sacred companionship of His watchful and affectionate mother, who taught him to lisp His earliest words. We can imagine the child playing amid the olive orchards and vineyards of that flowery valley, and His artless and loving ways. We can imagine the youth gazing with delighted vision on the splendid landscape that spread around, and feeling the influence of those picturesque and historic scenes. We can imagine the young man, with His heart touched by the mystery of nature and the pathos of a sad humanity, looking with deep and solemn meditation upon life and the world, and still toiling on in the humble pursuit of a mechanic, and restraining His lofty soul to the performance of His daily task. Still, whatever we picture to ourselves, no description of those interesting years and experiences has been given us by the Evangelists, except the few words that tell of His human growth and development, His increase in stature and knowledge and in favor with God and man. According to Jewish notions, the age of twelve years marked the transition from the period of childhood to that of youth ; and this time was chosen by Mary and Joseph as suitable for Jesus to accompany them to the great festi-

val at Jerusalem. They had, at the time to which our text refers, visited the city and participated in the religious services of the occasion. There can be no doubt that the boy was deeply affected by the sights of the holy place and the associations that would crowd upon Him. Coming fresh from the quiet of a village to tread the streets of the hallowed city ; standing in the temple with whose history He was familiar ; gazing upon the solemn services that signalized the passover,—with His keen susceptibilities and intelligence, what exquisite emotion must have thrilled Him, what visions of ancient glory and sacred manifestation passed before His mind, what thoughts deep and strange must have gathered in those affecting hours, and what new and mysterious impulses in this vivid sensibility must have stirred His nature to its depths. He was yet but a boy ; but think of Him with His freshness and purity, His eager inquisitiveness, His ardent receptivity, His reverent, awe inspired, and affectionate soul wandering amid sacred Sion, calling to mind her wonders of old time, listening to the devotions of the populace, watching the tides of life that flowed through her ways, and contemplating the manifold objects that strike the youthful and unsophisticated observer. Doubtless the time of the sojourn of the family there seemed brief to Him in His absorption in the scenes and experiences of His visit. He was not ready, it seems, to return with the company,—probably did not heed the notice of preparation that was given Him, in the intense preoccupation of His mind, and so He lingered in the city while His parents and their

friends departed. That was a caravan of considerable numbers with which Mary and Joseph travelled back to Nazareth ; and so, though it is likely they missed the youth more than once during the day, they probably supposed that He was somewhere with the company gratifying His innocent desire for novelty, and therefore felt no uneasiness about His safety. But at night He did not appear. The parents now cannot repress their concern. Going from group to group of the caravan made up of their kinsfolk and neighbors, expecting every moment to spy the beloved form, and so becoming more and more anxious as each family was approached and scrutinized, it finally dawned upon them that their child was lost. That was a moment of inexpressible anguish to the mother and her husband, when it was plain that further search amid their friends was vain. That they reproached themselves with their lack of carefulness, with their groundless confidence that all was well, with their neglect in setting out from the city without the positive knowledge that Jesus was with them, is evident enough to all who know the parental heart. We can understand, too, their misgivings as to His safety, their fears, their doubts respecting the manner of conducting the search. Had He strayed in some by-path on the road hither? Had He been inveigled into evil company in the city? Had He met with sudden and woful accident while wandering on the parapets of Jerusalem? Had cruel hands been laid upon Him, and the fair and tender head that had known so long the safety of a mother's arms been stained and disfigured? Was He

straying, home-sick and weary, in the awful solitude of a great town, where there was no friend to pity and comfort him? Where would He get shelter as night came on? Who would give Him bread in His hunger, or sympathy in His distress, if He had thus far escaped danger? "They turned back seeking Him." Ah! that was with a state of mind as different as possible from that with which they went up to Jerusalem a few days before. Then all was bright and joyous in the prospects of a pleasant journey. The fair boy, in the sweetness of new emotion and expectation, beguiled the way with pleasant talk, and every step brought nearer the pleasures of the festive commemoration. But now, carrying a heavy burden on their hearts, missing more and more the dear voice and the bright looks which shed such a charm upon life, full of self-reproach and a solicitude that has no language for its concern, they plodded on. It was natural that they should look for the youth in the city, for doubtless inquiries had convinced them that He had not been with the caravan at all in its homeward march; and so there they sought, as only parents can seek, for the best treasure that they have. Those who, even for a few brief hours, have missed a dear child can appreciate something of the tearfulness and suspense of that search, how eagerly and tremblingly it was pursued in by-streets and shops and retired places, how it was continued amid the attractive shows that would be apt to beguile the young, can imagine how those anxious eyes searched through suspicious places, how those hearts beat faster as they drew near groups of children at their

play, and how in their disappointment they envied the gladness of parents in the company of their boys. So one day passed, and another, and still another. They had searched wherever it seemed most natural that such a child should stray. They had gone on inquiring till doubtless they were faint from fatigue and solicitude. Certainly sleep and food could not be grateful in this time of suspense and grief. We can well imagine that the mother could not repress those old memories of the babe that was so wonderfully born ; they *would* come back,— all His beauty, the endearments of infancy, His sweet, pure life in Nazareth, her dreams of His prophetic career. So even in her bewilderment and anguish she must have had glimpses of a mother's hope. She could not give Him up ; and while nature was fainting from exhaustion there lingered supreme the great love that embosomed Him. It may have been the religious impulse that drew them to the temple ; for, had they thought Him there, they would have searched sooner in the place. No matter, they entered, and lo ! there was the boy, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. Think of the contrast between this impressive and touching scene and the picture that Mary had carried in her mind of her lost beloved son. No wonder that in the rebound of her overtaxed sensibilities she cried out, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Doubtless at the moment His reply seemed strange and harsh to her, with her heart running over with tenderness and vibrating yet with the

pulsations of an indescribable grief. "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" This is the first recorded saying of Jesus, and it contains the evidence of His dawning consciousness of His sonship. The divine element of His nature was beginning to exhibit its presence. That He should have forgotten His seeming duty to the family for a little space is not wonderful when we consider the inner force that was driving Him forward in an eagerness to grasp the questions of life, and in the intensity of an interest that no doubt had been stimulated by the scenes and services of the religious festival. The recognition of His Messiahship was not a sudden disclosure. He did not know as a child what He was conscious of as a man respecting His mission to the world. It must not be forgotten that His nature was purely human as well as divine. His humanity was positive and real,—not an illusive appearance, a phantasm. His body and mind were subject to the same laws of growth and development as our own. He was a babe, and knew the helplessness of infancy. He was a tender child, with the child's winsomeness, and innocent mirth, and trustful simplicity and guilelessness. He was a youth, with the kindling imagination, the vague and magnificent desires, the restless spirit, the radiant hopes, the busy brain of the adolescent period. And he was, finally, a man, with the clear-cut character, the sturdy will, the teeming intelligence, the vast perceptions, affluent affections, of the noblest manhood. But this development was according to the natural order of our human exist-

ence,—step by step and stage after stage of insight, experience, knowledge. He doubtless learned His alphabet at His mother's knees. He listened wondering to the stories that beguile childhood. He felt the delight of the pastimes that please and amuse the young. The beauty and glory of the fair earth came to Him with the freshness and charm that it brings to all ingenuous souls. His mind unfolded apace with the passing years and the instructions of a loving tutelage. His character obtained a symmetry, and fulness, and positiveness, and power, with the influences that wrought from without and within, and, as manhood, ripened to its maturity. All this, seen in its proper light and relations, is full of the sweetest significance to us in every stage of our existence ; for there is no period, from that of the tenderest infancy to burdened and afflicted years, that He has not experienced and with which He does not sympathize. “For verily he took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham : wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.” Those who have not pondered deeply the great question of the incarnation may inquire, “Why was the Lord so long on earth before engaging in His great work? Why did He not come in some tremendous manner and at once accomplish His divine mission ?” On the other hand, those who appreciate the need of “a faithful high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” know well enough the infinite benevolence and love that go the whole length of our earthly road, the grace and power of that sym-

pathy that embraces helpless infancy and youth, as well as life in its darkest, most joyous, and most peculiar experience. Jesus is one of us, by a true birth into the human family, and by a participation in our being, through its various stages of happiness and trial.

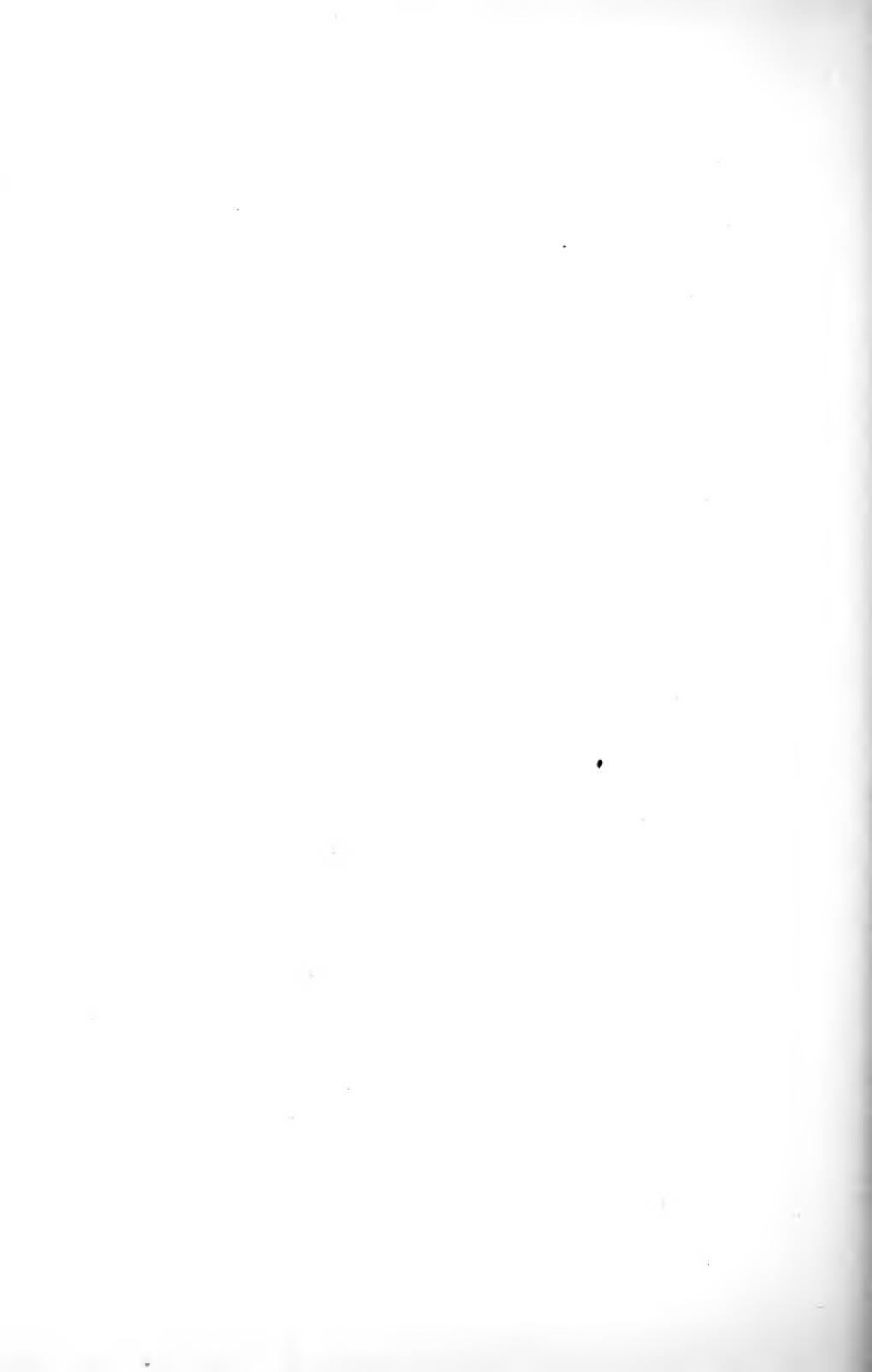
But alongside of this pure and unsullied and opulent humanity was the fact of the indwelling Word. For "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." Exclude this supreme fact, and He was but an ordinary man. Accept it in its scriptural signification, and you have the key to His perfect character, to His marvellous power, to His transcendent wisdom, to His infinite loveliness, to the grace and efficacy of His sacrifice and resurrection. But the consciousness of this divine nature was not, as has been suggested, a sudden disclosure to Him. Its light and energy, working with His unfolding humanity and inspiring and shaping that unfolding, did not reach the climax of revelation till the time of His inauguration at His baptism. Still the inward force of the indwelling Word did not cease to impel Him forward, to expand His faculties, to beget strange enlightenment, to shield from the taint of contamination, to exalt His apprehensions, to clothe Him with a sweetness and sublimity that were entirely new to the race. Something of the divine impulse, the inexplicable consciousness of His relation to the invisible world, with the thirst of occult knowledge and the eagerness of a soul touched by the visitings of heavenly desires, and a sense, perhaps, of the awfulness of life, characterized His experience at the hour when, to His mother's

chiding question, He said, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” The interests of His home-life there in Nazareth were for a time forgotten in the strong inflowing of sacred emotion and desire. The pastimes and engagements of childhood faded in the sweep of a larger horizon of thought and aspiration. The remembrance of paternal solicitude even was weak in the intensity of His awakened sensibility to divine realities. He was looking out on the infinite problems of our strange being with perplexed and yet not hopeless enthusiasm; He was coming face to face with questions that underlie all that is serious and pathetic and awful in our being; He was seeking the clew to the mystery of sin and suffering; He was feeling already the personal responsibility attaching to His relations to the race,—and the impulse was stirring to do His Father’s will. Of course, all of this was vague, so far as any plan or method was concerned; but we can apprehend enough to see that His answer, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” was not the utterance of an unfilial spirit,—was no childish protest against parental authority. It was prophetic of His great mission. It gave the hint of the wonderful nature that was ripening towards the fulfilment of all righteousness. It afforded a glimpse of the agitation, the insight, the sympathy, the purpose of the character, on which devolved such destinies to the race. He must, indeed, “be about His Father’s business.” This temporary withdrawal from the protection and company of the family was pardonable, on the ground of a higher alle-

giance and an experience inseparable from His nature and office. Seen in its true relations, it is entirely harmonious with the spirit of obedience which He always illustrated in the family, in the Jewish church, and in the State. His office was to "be about His Father's business." But mark, to discharge it He must go back to Nazareth. He must be subject to His parents. He must think and toil. He must take His share of the household burdens as the years bore Him to manhood. He must be content with His obscure life and humble place, though the evils of a wretched world cried for redress. He must endure for some eighteen years longer sights of sorrow and wrong and wretchedness, without asserting the glad news of His Messiahship and grace. But still in this retirement, and amid His labors and fatigues and frequent loneliness, "He was about His Father's business." In that lowly home, where doubtless after the death of Joseph He contributed to the support of the household ; in the mechanics' shop, where according to tradition He wrought yokes and ploughs and such like implements of husbandry ; in the fragrant paths of the green and flowery valley, where He walked in the ardor of His fresh hope and aspiration ; on the hill-tops, where He looked down on spots sacred with historic glory, and where wonderful Nature shed from royal landscapes her sweet influences upon His soul ; and in places consecrated to meditation and prayer, — He was doing His father's will, He was receiving the preparation for the perfect ministry that was before Him. Think not that during this space His heart did not burn

with holy indignation at the arrogance of pride and injustice. Think not that He did not yearn over the prodigals that went astray. Think not that He shed no tears over sorrows that blighted hope and home ; that He saw not the foulness of sin and the black shame of human ingratitude and alienation, and comprehended not the source and bitterness of man's woe. In the divine economy all this delay, this repression of impulse to go forth, this experience of poverty and toil, this education among the humble, and in self-mastery and self-knowledge, all that was peculiar to this period of His peasant life, was necessary to the full development of His nature, that He might be a "faithful High Priest," and the "Saviour of sinners." His Father's business was served here, and we hear of no murmur at His condition. There is no record to show that He was any thing but submissive and patient and self-contained. In all this how much there is to instruct us, to encourage our hearts in the postponement of anticipated achievement, and in hours when our work seems profitless because lowly and unknown ! How much to rebuke the forwardness that rushes without preparation to life's solemn duties, and the impatience of souls with a service that is unostentatious and obscure ! He who appeared to reveal the perfect will of God, and to do it in the most sublimely momentous interests of the human race ; who declared the principles of the universal religion, and opened up the gates of everlasting life, — He was content to remain for thirty years in the cottage and workshop of Nazareth ere He went forth to be the bene-

factor and Saviour of the world. Let us not think that we cannot serve well if our tasks are humble and names unheralded before men. You are about your Heavenly Father's business if you are cultivating the spirit of Jesus, and using your talents and resources with an eye single to the divine glory. But ah ! if there is intentional neglect here, a waste of gifts and opportunity, a perversion of knowledge and a hardness to the divine love, then your sin remaineth, and its inevitable condemnation.



LENTEN DAYS.

“The burden of the desert.”

ISAIAH xxi. 1.

VI.

THE BURDEN OF THE DESERT.

AS the traveller pursues his journey, day after day, over the illimitable waste, he finally becomes conscious of a weariness that is oppressive. Away, league upon league, stretches the vast expanse. The same sky is over him, the same dreary level before him, the same horizon bounds his vision at morning, noon, and night. No green hills or waving grain or refreshing groves greet his eye, nor does he hear the sounds of industry or amusement. Instead of pleasant valleys and cultivated fields and the blue ridges of distant mountains, he sees on every side the mighty sweep of the desert, with its monotonous surface and ceaseless destitution of life with its activities and enjoyments. The incessant sameness, the path over such a wilderness, at last amounts to a burden. He longs for a change, if it be nothing more than a rugged road and sights and sounds that would be otherwise uninteresting. To think of travelling such a landscape for years would be intolerable. He asks pleadingly, "When will it end?"

There are experiences of human life that are aptly figured by this "burden of the desert." In fact, all whose path runs on many years get into sad and lonely

places that they would fain escape. The great majority of the human family are born to trial and care,—to a service that becomes monotonous in its continuity and demands. Where there is no severe trial in one's experience, there may be, from the constant pressure of daily duty, a burden that is at last distressing. I do not disparage the dignity and necessity of labor. It is one of man's greatest blessings that he is obliged to be industrious, frugal, painstaking, provident ; that he has to take responsibilities and endure hardship. No strong and noble character is formed without such an education. Still the fact remains, that where there is no relief to the vigilance that guards the interests of the household ; where from year to year one is held down to continuous drudgery ; where the struggle to maintain existence, with its urgent necessities, is protracted without respite,—the very sameness of the strain and solicitude grows to be oppressive. There is a great multitude in the world who get no relief in their lives from the hard routine of their occupations and cares ; and though, of course, many of them are without high aspirations or fine sensibilities, yet among them are those who feel often that they are plodding over a desert. The dull and heavy monotony tires them. They are weary of the same path, the same service, the same changeless expanse, the same dark horizon. And looking out on the pictures that come frequently to their hearts, they ask for some pleasant change,—for a rest, perchance, on some musical shore, or amid mountains that are bright and sweet with health and peace.

It is not so much that any one place or any one occupation is better than another, that a change in the fatiguing or dismal routine of life is desirable. One carries himself with him, of course, wherever he goes ; and the base and discontented mind can never, by any mere removals, wherever it wander, find nobleness and content. Still, the agreeable variation of one's experience for a time is a recreation and a rest. It would be a blessed thing if all who know what the burden of the sameness and tiresomeness of business and household care is could have some little yearly respite,—some diversion from the heaviness and irksomeness of their way. Nothing is lost, but a great deal gained, when the desert-life is now and then broken up, and one is permitted to start afresh with a new experience.

Another burden of the desert is a destitution of human sympathy. Such is the constitution of man that he requires society, friendship, affection. That life is only partially furnished that is without the enrichments of love. It is in the sunshine of kindred natures, in the assurance of the trust and esteem and devotion of faithful hearts, that some of the most excellent traits are developed and the purest enjoyments known. Take away from one all pleasant companionship, all that testifies to neighborly confidence and concern, and life is barren indeed. And yet there are those who live on without the consciousness of a sincere friend ; who, amid all the multitudes around them, are assured of none who have them in tender esteem. When one has thus carried alone his trials, has felt the heart-hunger

that is never appeased, and appreciates the value and possibilities of friendship, his isolation and poverty amount to suffering. He bears the burden of the desert. We may believe that a good many know what this is,—what it is to walk a wearisome path with no trustful companion ; to abide where there is no home ; to come from work with no welcome of watchful eyes ; to go abroad with none to express interest or solicitude ; to endure disappointment, pain, sickness, without enjoying the support of affectionate assiduities ; to feel day after day that they are cared for by none in all the world. With such life not only grows monotonous, but cheerless. There is no verdure upon it. It is unblest with fountains of sweet waters.

But there is another desert over which the most, whose lives are protracted, have to travel, at least for a time, and this is the desert of affliction. Manifold are human woes, and strange and grievous the paths in which some are compelled to walk. It is true that some seem favored with peculiar blessings, and enjoy a freedom from the calamities that blight the roses of so many lives. And yet no one can feel assured, while in the world, that he is secure from affliction. For, of all certainties, human prosperity is uncertain. Many a man at a time when he expected to look upon a joyous household finds it overshadowed, and a great vacancy where he promised himself a sweet companionship. Many a one goes groping about, bowed down and weary, where the light of hope once fell full of gladness. Think of the mothers who bury their babes, and receive no more

to their caresses ; the maidens who trusted to false vows, and who carry the secret of their deception in broken hearts ; the long widowhoods, where toil and poverty are daily guests ; the maimed and decrepit who were once strong, but now are cut off from all the high activities and generous rivalries of the living ; the unsophisticated and affectionate, who have been bereft of their guides and counsellors : think of all those who watch hopelessly by painful couches ; who come back to roofs where no kind voice welcomes them ; who toil on amid the throng without sympathy ; who bear in their innocence dark suspicions ; who feel each day the bright illusion of health or competence or affection elude them : think of those whose wrongs are not righted, of those whose tears are never wiped away, of those who rest not in their anxieties and griefs ; the great, sad, motley caravan of the tried and the disconsolate the world over,—and you will confess that a vast number know the “burden of the desert.” Onward they travel, and yet they seem to be no nigher the longed-for place of refreshment. The birds do not sing for them, nor the brooks prattle, nor the cool mountains rise, nor the fruitful vales welcome them to pleasant retreats. It is on and on, with the burden pressing heavy, and with feet sore and weary, that they go.

But there is yet a more dreadful burden of the desert. To be destitute of the desirable things of this life is bad enough, but to have hopeless desolation in the soul is infinitely worse.

There are those believing in a righteous God, who

acknowledge their guiltiness to themselves, and who yet bear it unforgiven,— souls that have, perchance, sinned grievously against the light and prostituted their gifts, and who still would fain be thought unsullied. And there are souls whose fatal leprosy is disclosed to their burning disgrace. All such carry a load that is tormenting. Their hearts are parched. The sweets of life are turned to bitterness. Oh ! this disgust at self, this shrinking before infinite purity, this sense of loss and dishonor, this shame that can turn nowhere for concealment, this terrible isolation where one sees what he has abused and how awfully he is dethroned,— this is the desert in which the soul is stranded through transgression.

There are still other aspects and experiences of mankind that are figured by the text. From some natures the light of the eternal world seems almost or quite excluded. There has come upon them terrible doubt,— perchance the springs of belief are dry. They look up to no benignant face, infinite in pity and love. They hear no voices singing of the infinite wisdom that is in all things. No spirit of unutterable goodness seems pervading the universe, and touching their hearts with a blessed joy. The wonder and the beauty of the world is not asserting to them the ineffable glory which shines in the uncreated and the eternal. Some of these have not purposely discarded the gospel,— have not willingly welcomed the dark doubts that make their night. They have not preferred this spiritual vacancy and desolation. And yet they have to come to it. There are others

whose sins and wickedness have drawn them in. But, whatever the near or remote cause, there are experiences in many a man of a waste that is bleak and dreadful and despairing.

I know that with the most who are living without God the pleasures and pursuits of the present occupy their thoughts. They are quite absorbed in what pertains to sense and time. Their chief concern seems to be to gain the world. And yet there are those with no religious hope, who never cease to ponder the deep and inscrutable mysteries of being, and who go bowed beneath the load of despondency which their skepticism imposes upon them. They see life as under a sky of brass. Dark fate has fixed oblivion but a little way ahead to their hopeless eyes. To them the earth with its inhabitants is but a faint mote in the infinite expanse of the soulless universe. The boundlessness, the mystery, and the awfulness of things weigh upon them. They tire of the oppressive sense of their uncertainty, of their insignificance, their dark doom. They have no faith for prayer. They have no joy in the recognition of love perfect and almighty.

And there are myriads more who, wandering far from God, never succeed in hushing the cry of the soul for rest and home. They know that their desires outrun all earthly achievement. They know that they have capacities for divine friendship, for uses that are pure and holy and heavenly. They know that, unguided and alone, they cannot and do not find the perfect good.

They know that the insatiate soul lifts itself above all these visible shows, and pleads for blessed and everlasting possessions. Ah! is it only a desert way that our sad humanity is to travel, and must it hunger and thirst in vain? Is there nothing better and more enduring for the great multitude who toil and suffer than what they find in their short journey on earth? Our answer is the blessed gospel. It is the voice and cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the experience, too, of those who know Him by His indwelling life. Beyond the desert is the glorious land. There the everlasting mountains stand; there the perennial fountains flow; there the vales, beautiful and flower-enamelled, are embosomed. O poor humanity! with your long stages of labor and pain, with your tedious marches and moonless nights, with your thirst for happiness and your fading hopes, with all your woes and burials, how can ye bear it all without the blessed hope of what is beyond? Thank God it is true that the landscapes of morning and light and contentment are there, where the redeemed and purified shall be welcomed at last. And the assurance of this is one of the great supports and inspirations of those who learn sadly that this is not their continuing city.

As one on the Western plains nears the great range of the Rocky Mountains, towards evening he is sometimes permitted to look upon a scene of amazing impressiveness. The peaks are lifted up like towers of God's glory in the silent sky. On the mighty shoulders

of the mountains rest draperies of rose and purple, while their colossal breasts seem to brace the energies of a world. Over between the distant ridges are luminous mists, golden like star-dust, and palpitating and gleaming like the ethereal vesture of angels. The sky glows beyond, opal and pale green, with the fringing clouds of saffron and scarlet, and more remote, white as the winter snow. You seem to look into depths of celestial magnificence. The mountains themselves are the symbols of everlasting strength ; but you seem to see in them delicious resting-places,—a glorious seclusion, where the streams run sparkling, and the birds sing, and the light falls without blight or dazzling ray. You seem to hear their tones lulling and grateful with suggestions of rest and plenty and contentment. There seems security there amid the gigantic palisades, and inspiration in the fresh and unpolluted air, and gladness in the miracle of beauty that is ever unfolding, and which is ever new. It is so to the vision of the believer, weary with the burden of the desert of life, as full of faith, and in the leadership of the Master, he journeys on and nears the blessed world. The darker and more trying this life has been, the better does he appreciate the one that is revealed to him in the gospel of the Son of God ; and the more perfectly the life of love is manifested within him, the clearer and more inspiring shall be his apprehension of that higher state in which his being shall have perfect fruition. For it is with the spiritual eye that he looks on spiritual things. If his

heart is pure, if he is transformed into the likeness of his Lord, he shall behold unutterable glories, which shall be his. For “eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him ; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things ; yea, the deep things of God.” These “things,” you observe, are not learned by human wisdom, but by the soul, which, through its renewal in holiness, is prepared for them. That knowledge is in Christ the Lord. If any ever trod a desert way, or bore its burden, it was this divine Redeemer ; and yet He saw and knew the wondrous blessedness of His Father’s house, that “imperial palace whence He came.”

So, though the disciple have here an experience of the desert, it is his privilege to enjoy the companionship and sympathy of Him who passed through it all, and who will give sweet wells of Baca even in the lonely and arid places, and who leads on to the land whose sunshine is the smile of God. Therefore, weary pilgrim, be cheered and consoled. Your way is not altogether barren. Many and many an oasis you reach and enjoy in your heavenward journey. Many a rest you have where you would like to tarry, for the Lord is near. But even when you feel most oppressed and forsaken, with Faith’s strong eye you can look forward. Out of the gloom rise the fair trees that grow beside the water of life. The peerless mountains of the heavenly Zion lift their fadeless summits in airs that have no taint of

death. You discern the valleys of rest afar, whose fruits never decay, and where the loved who have gone before you abide. But, best of all, the good Shepherd there leads His flock where they suffer hunger and thirst no more, and where, pure like Him, they are glad for ever.

“Bury me with my fathers.”

GENESIS lxix. 29.

VII.

LOVE IN DEATH.

THERE is a wonderful naturalness in the delineations which the Bible gives us of our human characteristics, and, as we read what is said of those whose lives are portrayed on its sacred pages, we recognize continually the fidelity of the descriptions. Nothing is more marked in our humanity than the family relation, and some of the most touching and beautiful transcripts of it, in all history, are found in the Scriptures. Take the story of Joseph, with which you are all so familiar, and all through it are incidents and features which illustrate the household interests, the domestic feelings and sentiments, which were as sincere and tender then, in the infancy of the world, as now. The fact of this simple naturalness in the portrayal of what is human in the Bible is one of the evidences of its genuineness, and one reason of the powerful hold that it has upon the hearts of all generations. The sorrow of Jacob has a parallel in all paternal hearts that mourn over the loss of a beloved son. His reluctance to allow Benjamin to be separated from him, his clinging to the old associations of the household as age came upon him, his joy in the discovery of his long absent Joseph, his benedictions of his children,

and his wishes and arrangements about his burial,— all speak of the deep instincts and ineradicable feelings that are characteristic of the race, and which appear all along in the experience of those who live to see their children grow up around them. The ties of family are the strongest that we know. Such is the gracious ordination of Heaven, that those who are near of kin are bound together by deep and sacred affections. They live in each others' lives. They participate in what is best and noblest in each others' characters and companionships. The love of each other is one of the sources of their choicest happiness. It comes so in these relations that the mind instinctively associates with the beloved name whatever is most precious in this life, and whatever seems attractive and blessed in the life to come. For, where these home relations have been continued through a long period, there have inevitably been born, in joy and in sorrow, in labor and trial, in mutual cares and mutual successes, a series of experiences that have the deepest significance of all that the heart can know. There come a community of thought in the effort for the advancement and adornment of life, an appreciation of character in its more hidden sources and depth, a sense of the value of affectionate companionship and support, a knowledge of the rich and inviolable treasures which accumulate in mutual helpfulness, and the growth of the soul in sweetness and strength; a habit of trusting and consulting and communing together, which tends to bring lives into more profound unity, and lead them to think of the

future as quite desolate, if these relations should cease. The children that grow up in the household only deepen these attachments. All the service that is done for the preservation and the comfort and the welfare of those who are gathered at the board, is a means of strengthening and purifying these affections. The very pains that are endured in ministering to the weak, in providing for the helpless, in all the exigencies of poverty and sickness and misfortune, are instrumental in exalting the sense of the preciousness of those who are thus dependent upon us. As persons in middle life or advancing age, who have children growing up around them, look back to the days of their infancy and youth, they appreciate, as never before, the value of parental tenderness and care. Their parents seem clothed with a greater sacredness. They understand better than they did a mother's love, a father's solicitude, the sacrifices, the constancy of watchful assiduity, of those who guarded and taught them under the roof of home. With their experience of parental care and tenderness and affection they feel more deeply identified with those who gave them birth, and their gratitude and reverence are proportionally increased. Life is therefore strongly fastened backward in holy bonds, as well as projected forward in the hopes and affections that abide with the children of the household. The parent carries on with him not only the associations that are growing and strengthening daily in the circle about him, but the retrospection of a long past, when he was the subject of tender care, and an incalculating friendship. And so,

among the bright looks and cheerful voices of the young that are near him, he sees in memory the revered heads, the benignant faces that long ago bent over him, and hears the voices of wisdom and endearment that spoke in the years that are gone. However ardently he forecasts the future in the interests of the young, he feels bound very closely to an ancestry whose virtues he prizes more as he is more conscious of the solicitudes and responsibilities of his *own* position and influence. And as time goes on, and family history is made, in the changes and joys and sorrows of home, the heart instinctively cherishes whatever has been most dear and valuable in experience. Jacob could not disassociate his love for Joseph from that of the mother of the boy, and he clung more fondly to Benjamin because his brother had vanished and Rachel was no more. In almost every family it happens that something is made to seem more sacred because it was prized and esteemed by a dear one who has gone,—one on whom are centred a peculiar interest and affection, through some reason that the heart only can explain. There gets to be a profound feeling of identification with the object loved, so that life seems broken and imperfect without it. This taking into one's self the grief or affliction of another has illustration in those who came to the Saviour, asking for Him to have mercy on them, when they sought a cure for a dear child. And that gracious Redeemer never sent one such away unblest. He showed all through His divine ministry how sacredly He regarded these family relations. Born into a human

family Himself, He knew all that pertains to helpless infancy and hopeful and wondering youth. Whatever was holy and precious in home He learned in a real experience, and His life there with Mary and Joseph is invested with a heavenly charm. He wrought His first wonderful work at a marriage, consecrating these domestic ties with His presence. Mothers brought their children to Him, and with His benediction life seemed gladdened to eyes that saw the evils in the world. It was some home that He was continually illuminating by His sympathetic presence, by His healing touch, by His consoling words, by a love that made life cheerful and brave. What evidence could be stronger of His appreciation of what is in a human heart than when He gave the widow of Nain her son, when He rejoiced the Syrophenician woman with the cure of her daughter, when He sent the word of life to the officer at Capernaum, and when He brought Lazarus back to the desolate home in Bethany. Almost His last word ere He died in agony was to His mother. So, if any thing is clear in the gospel, it is certain that the family ties are holy, and the instincts of the true heart, with reference to kindred, approved of Heaven.

And it is natural to desire a continuation of these relationships. The patriarch Jacob in his last request says, "Bury me with my fathers;" and this feeling has illustration all along the ages in different races and climes. What is it but the outward symbol of that which is deepest in the heart? What is it but an expression of the preciousness of these earthly relation-

ships? Bury me with my fathers. Of, course in the grave, with silence and darkness, there is no device or knowledge. So far as the perishing bodies are concerned, it cannot matter essentially where they repose when the spirit has fled. And yet they are the tenements of thought and will. They are associated with all that is most expressive in our being. With them are grouped the activities, the endearments, the acquirements, the possessions that make up our estimate of life. When the patriarch said, "Bury me with my fathers," he thought of those whom he revered and loved, whose remains were lying in the sepulchre of Machpelah; he thought of the holy friendships that had consecrated and sweetened his years,—and those forms of parent and wife and kindred seemed endued with life and feeling in the strong ardor of his soul. He wished to continue the relationship, and would sleep with those from whom he descended and loved. How natural is this sentiment, and how largely is the custom observed throughout the world. When we think of death and our place of burial, it is with thoughts of others who have gone before us. A lonely grave, a burial away from friends and kindred,—remote, unvisited, neglected,—brings sad thoughts. We cannot help shrinking from the picture that we make of it. To die alone, to be buried by strangers, to lie afar from any dust that once was dear, is not what we would prefer. But there, where our ancestors repose, where parents are entombed, where sleep the companion of our journey, or child, or sister, or brother, or beloved friend,—there,

too, we would be borne by tender hands, when we can tell none how kind they are. It is the same feeling that prefers those who love us to minister to us in our last hours, and perform the last offices that friendship can render. The human cries out of the darkness of death for the beloved presence, the heart that was true and kind. And if we can feel that when we are gone there will be any to follow us with sorrow to the grave, and there to plant some symbol of affection, and, as the days and years pass, to go aside sometimes and think of us as we were, with our friendship and faith, there comes a grateful emotion. There is something sweetly tranquilizing in the thought that we shall lie down with the family around us, the revered and good who closed their eyes long ago, and those who follow us out of the doors where we followed others who have gone ; and that they shall bring the children one by one to sleep by our side. All this is grateful to our thought, I say ; and why ? What could it mean if the heart did not reach onward to everlasting attachments, to life with the beloved beyond the grave ? And oh, how dark would it be, when we come to face the dread necessity of death, were it not for the light that comes from the broken sepulchre of Christ ! What would be our hope without this victorious and mighty Saviour, who has put death under his feet ? Dear friends, here is an assurance, glorious and indubitable, that is given for everlasting comfort and strength. He who consecrated home while on earth, with all that could sanctify and sweeten it, prepares the heavenly home. He it is who shows the

precious brotherhood of our humanity ; how that all the peoples and nations of the earth are one family in Him ; that all are united as the children of our Father who is in heaven, and redeemed by His well-beloved Son. Oh the largeness of the divine grace, the preciousness of the divine disclosures ! We soon pass away. Our friends are passing on. The old family circle is more and more broken up. The dearest associations are sundered. We know very well that after a little the great world will go on, and we have no voice in all its affairs. And as we think of the graves that are green over so many that were dear, we say, "Bury me with my fathers," and bring others that must follow after a while, to rest by my side. And yet our thoughts and our hearts go forward still to a rest where there is no weariness, and to a home that no cloud of sorrow shall ever darken. We want the light that never goes out,— the joy that is full in our Father's house. But without Christ and His victory what would be our hope ? Ah, this blessed and mighty One has not only suffered for us, but overcome the grave. In His face is the radiance of immortality. He has opened wide the gates to the city where there is the need of no sun to shine into it, for the glory of God doth lighten it for ever. And yet none but the pure in heart may enter in. Washed in His righteousness, all are clean. Quickened and renewed in His love, life is lifted upward and enriched, and fitted for the felicities of the household of God. Oh what hope, what strong assurance, may we have through Him who is the first-born from the dead, the living, loving, victorious Lord.

We do not go down to the dark valley as if it were the end. "The grave is the inn of the disciple on his way to the New Jerusalem," as said the great and good Dean Alford. His sleep is an awakening to peace and glory unutterable. For all the beloved in the Lord will Jesus bring with Him,—the little ones who just gave us their smile and vanished, and the earthly parent on whom we leaned so long, and the dear companion whose absence left a long, long sorrow,—all who saw in the holy Jesus their friend and brother, and loved to look to Him as better than all. Oh, to-day let us come gladly to celebrate the love of this Redeemer and conqueror! Surely if there is a sweet light on our lives, it comes from Him ; and if there is a hope better than all others, He gives it ; and if there is due a thanksgiving that should take our hearts and our all upward in adoring gratitude, and a spirit of tender and holy consecration, it is to Him who taught us and washed us, and bids us follow Him here in love, that we may live with Him when all that is earthly and changing has passed away.

“I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

JOHN xvi. 32.

VIII.

LONELINESS.

THESE words were uttered by our Lord towards the close of His earthly ministry, having in view the desertion that He should suffer, and His loneliness in the day of trial. Though human sympathy was precious to Him, and though doubtless it was with a sharp pang that He marked the conduct of His disciples when He was apprehended and borne to the judgment seat, still, in the profoundest sense, He was not alone. The Father was with Him. His resources were divine ; and, being a perfect son, He had the consciousness of the paternal love of the everlasting God, and in Him He was mighty to suffer and to conquer in our cause.

Those who are knit to Christ, and in His spirit are leading His life, may appropriately use these words as expressive of their own experience.

Periods of loneliness are not at all uncommon, so far as our earthly life is concerned, and it must always be so in this world. Friends like to look upon each other's faces, to enjoy the sunshine of each other's society. There is a refreshment in the glow that warms the heart in the interchange of interesting thought, in the discovery of congenial sympathies, in the looks and voices of those whose companionship is dear. The burden of

life is lightened by household intimacies and the delights that are born in sincere affection. So when, by travel or removal, one is cast among strangers, or wanders far from home in a strange land, it is natural that he should feel the effect of absence,— that he should recur fondly to the familiar scenes that lie behind him. And the more interesting the sights that welcome his gaze abroad, the more attractive the life that he finds in his journeys or his studies, the more will he be apt to long for the presence of those who can appreciate his enjoyments and respond to the ardor of his emotions. It is into a friendly ear, into a receptive heart, that he would pour the expressions of his satisfaction at the sight of historic scenes, of unique and magnificent art, and of serene and affluent nature. He misses the appreciative eye, the ardent soul, the religious mood, the exalted understanding, of the friend who is far from him, but who would, if present, enter so deeply into the frame of his richest and deepest experience.

But this loneliness becomes more poignant when death has taken away those who are dear. While the loved are living, there is an amount of companionship, though their paths, for a space, may be widely apart. Though as you roam over the distant prairie, or sail the seas, or climb the hills of the Orient, you experience involuntarily a sense of loneliness, you still have the society of pleasant thoughts and memories, that are more precious the longer the interval of your absence. The consciousness that some are thinking of you with tender interest, that every day some mention your name

in their prayers, that hearts are counting the weeks till you return,—all this mitigates the pain of separation. Then, too, as you cherish the precious images of their worth ; as you say to yourself, “ How this which is so interesting to me would give them joy ; ” and as the anticipation of a reunion again is sweet,—you get some savor of their society, some comfort of heart. But, when death bears away your treasure, when the dust covers the form that shed such a cheer upon your path, you cannot feel the glow of hope that made your steps quicken towards home ; nor does memory speak with such inspiration to the soul. That the vanished friend may not be far away you may fondly believe ; it may be a solace to you to think that the departed are still permitted, as pure spirits, to note your career, and to sympathize with your experience, still you know that there can be no more actual meetings in time. Home must still be destitute of their voices and their smiles. The vacant place cannot be filled. The gentle heart, so true and tender and strong, is not there to give you rest and peace. You look forward, but the way seems long ; and beyond, but oh, how thick the veil ! You are alone, and in that loneliness you picture what once made your days so bright and the earth so beauteous, till, in the vision, you realize a deeper, sadder solitude. Times come when the consciousness of your bereavement is intensified, when you wonder why any can be gay, and when things once so real seem thin and spectral in your gaze. “ Oh for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still ! ” you say to yourself, longing so much

for the old companionship, and having so much to utter that almost breaks your heart, and appreciating so thoroughly the rounded fulness of a life that the lost love might have made so rich. Ah, how many know well what this loneliness is who were once strong in the friendship of the pure and good! How many, in spite of their honored names, their affluence of possession, and their sumptuous homes, bow down often in a sense of solitude that is distressing!

But it is not mere separation from the living, it is not merely the bereavements of death, that make loneliness for man. There is a solitude with some amid the densest throng, there is a wall of partition between some who breathe the same air and stand in the midst of the same scenes. Where the man's experience is beyond that of his fellows, where from the elevation and scope of his thought and aims there are none with whom he has communion, he is alone. He may, indeed, participate in society, and seem to others like themselves, but still he is further removed than if mountains rose between them. For it is the mind that makes company. There can be no society where hearts do not feel some kindred thrill, where in aspiration and endeavor there is no sympathy binding soul to soul as it gazes into life. The great thinkers, the pioneers of humanity in the higher fields of investigation and pursuit, are always lonely. On the side of your nature that is developed more largely than your neighbor you are least understood. In purposes that keep you farthest from the vulgar and sensual you have little of their sympathy.

Take your deepest experience, when the visible and all the glories of it seemed melting away and shrivelling up, and when life in its pith and kernel was most awful to you, and few can appreciate your mood. And so some find themselves in a solitude amid scenes of hilarious festivity, and go unaccompanied, though a thousand walk their earthly way. A certain bond of humanity, it is true, holds all in its embrace ; but natures must have a community of spiritual apprehension, of aim, of interest, to come into helpful alliance.

And this is seen clearer in the objects that are the supreme purpose of all great and singular souls to promote. Let a man be caught up in an intense consciousness of the value of truth yet unrecognized by the world, let him be spurred with a commanding passion to achieve a vast good for the race, let him see clearly the necessity of an enterprise that, if accomplished, shall shower its benedictions rich and sure upon the living, and at the same time get no recognition for his philanthropy, and have no support for his sacrificing fidelity, and he shall know what it is to be alone. Such were the prophets of humanity, who were scoffed at by their generation ; the sages, who were assailed as the enemies of the Lord ; the martyrs of religion and science, who lived far in advance of their age, but who were faithful to the light that was in them, and were willing to suffer if truth could be victorious. Surely there were lonely hours for Socrates and Galileo and Columbus and Cœrsted and Franklin, Watt and Stevenson and Fulton and Morse, and for many a student of the mysteries of

nature and the universe. Surely the path was often lonely to souls like Paul and Chrysostom and Berengarius and Huss and Wickliff and Luther, and the long line of illustrious saints and disciples in ages of darkness and persecution and confusion. It is hard enough to pursue a high and holy enterprise without encouragement ; it is grievous enough to labor on in obscurity and poverty and sickness and bereavement, for the sake of truth which few or none accept ; but to do this, as many have done it, in the midst of opprobrium and injury, yea, at the risk of life, to meet with hostility in striving to secure a sure good for those who treat their benefactors as enemies,—this is leaving one to a solitude in which only the strongest and most heroic natures can endure. Such see that they are shut out from the sympathy of the multitude, who live on as if they were the fools of phantasy. And so life is lonely in the high places of their thought and the low places of their humiliation ; lonely in the meditations that absorb their thought and the energies that they apply to their undertakings ; lonely in their devotion to their purpose and in the depth of their disappointments and trials.

But I need not describe further these times of human loneliness. They are manifold and singular ; and each, as he rises to lofty endeavor, or is smitten strangely and sorely, gets the clew to their meaning and their distress. But if his spiritual life be true and sincere, though so far as earthly concerns go he *is* alone, he is not alone in the sense of a divine friendship and inspiration. Our Lord trod our earthly road. He was one of us in all

that is peculiar to our humanity, save sin ; and, deeper than our experience fathoms, and higher than it ascends, extended the majestic volume of His own. For who was ever alone in the world, if it were not Christ, the Man of Sorrows ? Wherever was there a nature so little appreciated and understood ? Where did one ever enter into depths of life's august meanings like Him ? Who ever assumed such a mission and consecrated himself to such a work as that which brought the Lord of Glory to the cross ? Where has one ever stood so near men and yet so far away, been so darkly suspected and so cruelly treated, while discharging the sublime ministry that should disclose God and lift a race to the brightness of His divinity ? Our darkest woes, our most singular trials, our sense of remoteness from the confidence and affection of men, can merely give us the clew to that solitude which He knew in the burden and pain of His ministry of reconciliation. And yet though those who had been His most intimate companions deserted Him, when the dark hour of His passion and apprehension came on, and though there was not a single earthly friend to give Him company during that terrible night of anguish, He could say, " I am not alone, for the Father is with me." His soul rested on the Infinite. He was sure of the love of Him whose best name is Love. He had in His deepest consciousness the support and sympathy of the everlasting God and Father : there was compensation ; there was comfort ; there was life ; there was victory ; there was the eternal joy. And so in a significant sense it may be with us. The blessings

of home and friendship are by no means to be depreciated. It is a blessed thing to have the enjoyments of affection and the sympathies of those who are around us. Do not think, however, whatever your lot, however adverse your condition, that there is no heart beating tune with your own, no eye that marks your fidelity, and no compensation that shall reward your obedience and devotion to the truth. It was hard to bury that beautiful child, to give up that well-tried companion of your happiest days, to stand in places deserted now by friends that were loveliest and by intimacies that were holiest. It is hard to dwell apart with no precious companionship, to long for the society that shall supply the deep, human need, and to feel capable of friendships, high and pure and strong, that are never made. It *is* hard to labor on in a noble cause without the encouragement of those who shall reap from your toils and denials, and to carry the deep consciousness that what is best and truest in you is not known nor admired. It *is* hard to be put apart from sweet intercourse by poverty, and the obscurity of your name, or mistaken prejudices ; hard to bear all that you have to bear in your separations and bereavements and labors and pains : but if you are knit to Christ, and a joint heir with Him in the inheritance of light, you are not alone. There are blessed presences in your solitude ; there are holy and beloved voices in the silence of your retirement. An unseen hand is over you, a light shines on your darkness. There is a heart infinite with its love that beats in sympathy with your deepest life. There is a

spirit working in you, refining, chastening, uplifting, educating, comforting, inspiring hope, patience, trust, faith, the ardor of holy desire and the peace of a sure victory, whose mysterious operation you may but little understand, but which is the paternal grace and the paternal benediction.

You are too apt to forget, amid the pressure of life's burdens, the whirl and confusion of the world, that the divine love is personal, individual, discriminating, unchanging, and that through ways that we know not the Lord is leading us on. When you seem most nearly deserted, He may be drawing you nearer to Himself. When, in pain and weariness and disappointment, you may feel *most* alone, He may be preparing you for more wonderful disclosures of His love, for more gracious apprehensions of Himself. Your times are in His hand. The Good Shepherd knows His sheep. There is no father, no friend, no brother, so pitiful and compassionate as He who calls you His child. Whatever else may fail, be sure that His everlasting love will not fail. He is with you in your struggle against sin ; in your search for truth ; your toils, and griefs, and loneliness, and trials. All your hope, all your patience, all your aspiration, all your regard for what is excellent and imperishable, comes from Him. And as He has given you your capacity for His friendship and His likeness, He will train you and guide you to Himself, if you are submissive and obedient. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !" And to discover that love, behold the

Lamb of God. Ah ! without God in Christ, without the sympathy and grace and inspiration and life of the Eternal One and the Just, what shall we do, and where shall we go, and what shall be the end of this existence that is given us ? Picture to yourself an ocean, boundless, endless, alone ; from whose billowy wastes rises no shore, in whose measureless expanse is no isle of beauty and calm, and over which the cloud-rack hangs sullen, dreary, and portentous. See there a frail raft bearing a single form. Onward it floats over the wrinkled sea. The winds come swift and chill over the dark waters, and it floats on ; and the waves, growling and hissing, toss it like a bubble, and it floats on ; and the clouds gather, and bend scowling and angry and bleak over it, and it floats on : onward under the brazen noon, where it is swung on the great swells of tide, and onward in the spectral twilight, when the waters seem like writhing serpents, and onward under canopies lit by no cheer of stars : onward and onward, into the depth of the unknown, into banks of gloom written all over with despair, into abysses of the distance where there is no end, — floats on those few planks that single soul. Is he not lonely there ? Is *that* not solitude, with no friendly face into which to gaze, with no human voice to break the awful monotony, with no gleam of woodland or cape to wake the hope of rescue, with no sweet odor of a fair shore to salute his sense, and no glimmer of a beacon to tell of home ? Is that not *loneliness*, left to float, and float, and float, without guide or compass, without a friend or hope, — on and on into the desolate waste, and the aw-

ful spaces of silence and darkness and despair? But oh, what is this to represent the soul that is without God, utterly isolated in the bereavement that takes the infinite Father away; journeying into the eternities alone, living on without the Father's smile and the Father's care and the Father's love; wandering, and lost, and abandoned in the infinite terror of its loneliness and woe!

“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” — 2 CORINTHIANS iv. 10.

IX.

DYING WITH CHRIST.

WHAT a contradiction this must seem to the unspiritual,—dying for the sake of living, making tribulation the way to peace, going to crucifixion that we may rise to glory, bearing about as common things, losses, pains, sorrows, in the consciousness that good is coming, and sure blessedness, and everlasting gain ! Yet this is the eternal law. All growth is through decay. All gain through loss. All glory through humiliation. All life through death. The rocks crumble away to make the soil. Vegetation decays and enriches the earth. Fruits and grain perish in supporting the animal creation. And higher still, childhood dies into youth, and youth into manhood. Fancies and dreams are supplanted by realities. Deliberate action succeeds random impulse. Through the painful throes of labor come vigor and learning and wealth. And so life ever mounts up on the dissolution of what is lower through all the cycles of universal nature.

And the highest expression of this law is in Christ and the Christ-like life. It is in Him that is prefigured what is profoundly true in the experience of every soul that is true to Him. And the characteristic feature of

it all is dying to live,—surrendering something that something more precious may be secured, accepting the cross that we may wear the crown. In a word, the whole truth of godliness is summed up in sacrifice. And Jesus is its perfect embodiment and illustration. He becomes poor that we may be made rich ; does the work of a servant that we may have the inheritance of sons ; goes to an ignominious death that we may rise to a sovereignty of good and everlasting joy. Comprehending His gospel, we see that it is literally by giving Himself away that He draws to Himself the hearts of men. It is love—supreme, unalterable, exquisite love—that makes Him victorious. By humiliations, suspicions, affronts, sufferings, death, His real life was not suppressed, but rather it royally asserted itself and blossomed out in glorious fulness and surpassing power.

Dying with Jesus in the body is bearing the distresses, pains, crosses, that come in the life conformed to him. It is through the body that we are first made conscious of existence. This is the medium of all sensation, the wonderful instrument of the mind, the vase that holds the immortal soul. Through this flows into man the solemn beauty of the universe, through this he comes into fellowship with kindred natures, and is linked with the world of mastery and mystery around him.

But bodily infirmities, this dying of the body, does not necessarily impair the spiritual life ; but may, through the divine compensations, enrich it. For who has not seen the loveliest characters among those who are the feeblest and most afflicted ? Who has not seen some,

from whom are shut the sights and sounds of the fair earth and loving friends, the most patient and contented and grateful of the living? Who has not marked the holy resignation of life-long sufferers, the wonderful sweetness of delicate invalids, the abounding faith of some who have lost every thing except the joy of their Lord? As in a forest where the storm once tore its way, is seen, years after, the rarest beauty in the vines and branches that have been twisted and interlaced in glorious festoons, and in flowers whose seed was sown by the wings of the remorseless wind; so here, in these stricken ones, grace appears sometimes in fruits of surpassing loveliness. The soul has conquered the body. Pain has purified. In physical weakness life has reached out into divine sunshine, and grown strong and brave and beautiful in its hold upon the cross. And how many humble roofs, how many lowly couches, lit up by few sympathetic faces, may we believe can testify to this! The sufferer is knit to Jesus, and His life is manifested within him. Dying with Him, there has come the life of the higher nature. The spiritual man has been clothed upon while the outer man has decayed. The soul is fed from the everlasting life.

Again, this dying with Jesus is realized in a participation with Him in sacrifices for His sake. The life of the Lord was a perpetual sacrifice,—a dying for man that the divine life might be restored. So the life of Jesus in the disciple is one of tender sympathy, hopeful, generous, loving; one that suffers long and is kind; one that ministers graciously and denies itself, and ac-

counts it honor enough and praise enough if it can do the lowliest service for those who need. Yes, whatever may be said of the selfishness of men, and this is discouraging enough, there are some who have learned deeply what this dying is, and who, instead of lamenting that they are called to a hard service, rejoice that they are permitted to take a cross that the Master bore. These feel in themselves the anguish of a world groaning and travailing in tribulation ; they forget their own sorrows in their eager effort to help and comfort those more tried than they. It is glory enough for them to bring cheer to a single home and a single bleeding heart. They work on, though amid suspicions and blame, believing that the Lord's kingdom is ever coming, that now they are members of it, and that sin and wrong shall be put under foot and destroyed. And so His life of patience and sympathy thus ripens in them. They grow strong in His strength and in His affections. Living for others, they apprehend more fully the god-like life.

And the same principle is seen in all the discipline, however sad it may be, of the disciple. Looked on from without, the state of some is pitiable indeed. Now that labor has been unremunerative, now that friends have changed or are gone, now that home is robbed of its jewel and health is broken, and foes rise up in the way, what is there, one is tempted to ask, that is worth living for? Is it not better never to have been born? Ah! life is coming in this death : the patient spirit, the pure heart, the celestial vision, the holy temper, the large

charity, the peace that antedates the everlasting rest,—graces that the Holy Spirit nurtures in the faithful soul. This comfort was taken away, but thus the heart was flung more utterly on the Lord. Wronged and maligned, the disciple has learned how blessed it is to forgive. Dying unto sin, carrying in his own experience heart-ache, neglect, and poverty, he has found the deep meaning of the cross and the hiding of its power. And so, if you would find characters that shine with the brightest lustre, look not where all is most outwardly prosperous in their condition, not among the luxurious and flattered and pampered ; but in homes shadowed by great trials, in lives that have trod the winepress of suffering. That one may seem to you as bereft of all that is desirable ; but no ! there is hope like an anchor to the soul, a love that has grown deep and rich in heavenly friendship, patience, meekness, and purity, and constancy that the bleak air of the world cannot kill. This is what makes man noble and valuable. The base and earthly must be purged out of him. He must take hold of the life of God. What he lives for is to do the Master's work, to come to His likeness. All that obstructs his spiritual growth, all that shuts out the divine light or blights the spirit of love, must die away. The real dying of Jesus was His renunciation of all that could impair the perfection of that ministry of reconciliation which was consummated on the cross. Here is the pattern for the disciple. He comes into it more and more by the yearnings of prayer, by the upward reach of faith, by the cru-

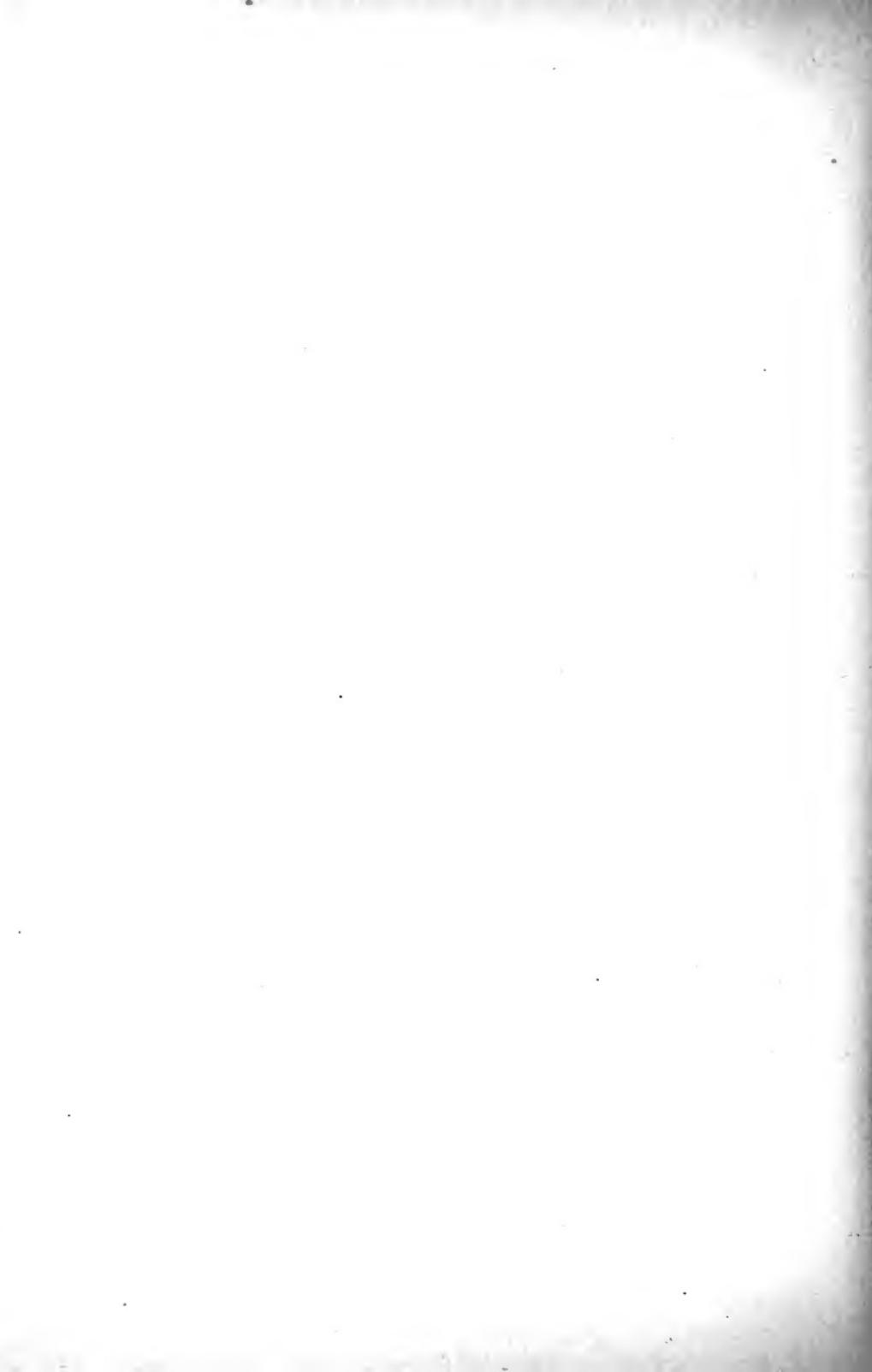
cifixion of self, by the sympathies that take up the griefs of men and make life a blessing to hungry and troubled souls. And oh! this life of Jesus ; this lowly, submissive, rejoicing life ; this blessed rest in His love ; this sight of His perfection, more ravishing as sin is purged away ; this tender, precious communion with Him who gives us His own refreshing life ; this hiding in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, secure and satisfied for evermore,—this compensates for all earthly losses and decays. So in the deepest death with Him there is the intensest and most blissful life. In sacrificing all things sinful, for His sake, the man is clothed with His righteousness, which is a garment of perpetual praise. He counts all things here but loss for the excellency of the divine knowledge. In the evolution of such a character, in the prospect of such a weight of glory, dying is living. The resurrection is already begun. Christ is all in all.

While we prize, as we ought, all temporal blessings as good gifts from God, let us not feel that they are essential to our highest life. As certain herbs being bruised give their choicest fragrance, as precious gums exude from the wounded tree, so out of buffetings and trials are born the heavenly graces. We do not begin to see the glory of the Christian life until we learn the power there is in sacrifice. There is nothing really contradictory in this dying and living unto Jesus, in the sorrow and the joy of the believer. But all the secret mystery of this, the triumph and contentment of love,

we cannot know until we come into the secret of God. This daily crucifixion, this daily renewal into higher and holier life, this is the lesson which we have to learn for ourselves. We do not attain heaven by careless and indolent steps. It is through struggle, perchance pain of some sort. But this is only one side ; the other is holiness, joy, victory.

Remember, whatever your experience of hardships here, that our Father has promised more than you ask or think ; that He who is for you is more than all who are against you. "For," says the Apostle, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"The seed must die before the corn appears
Out of the ground, in blade and fruitful ears.
Low have the ears before the sickle lain,
Ere thou can'st treasure up the golden grain ;
The grain is crushed before the bread is made,
And the bread broke ere life to man conveyed.
Oh, be content to die, to be laid low,
And to be crushed, and to be broken so,
If thou upon God's table mayest be bread,
Life-giving food, for souls an hungered."



EASTER AND EASTER-TIDE.

"Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus."—
JOHN xix. 41, 42.

X.

THE SEPULCHRE IN THE GARDEN.

SO it was in view of a pleasant scene that Jesus died, and in the midst of a garden that He was laid. It is always thus on earth that dark and bright realities stand in contrast. Life and death confront each other. There is a sepulchre in every garden. How aptly does this faithful touch of the Evangelist illustrate all that is sincere in human experience! Taking the fact described here in its deep suggestiveness, let us read in its typical illumination a chapter of life that is common to us all.

And, first, I observe that each man has a garden. It may not be that where the outward sense is regaled with fruits and flowers and odorous airs,—not that, but a sacred enclosure of the heart. No life, indeed, is without its bright spot,—hidden away, perchance, among sad memories, yet reverently cherished. As on bleak hill-sides of splintered rock green things nestle, and a flower here and there springs up, so in human experience there is something still bright where exist poverty and corroding care. None have been without their dream of a good to come. Some fair hope has glided into the heart. Some true and tender feeling once had place, and is not wholly forgotten, even if the man has wandered far in sin. There is yet the odor of a past

delight in days that have gone under the cloud. Years ago the roses and lilies were planted ; and many a pleasant blossom has unfolded since, though watered often with tears. Very beautiful are some of these gardens, with dear friendships, with the engaging interests of home, with noble plans for self-culture and benevolence ; very beautiful with generous trusts, and holy endearments, and the music and sunshine of dreams. All have their garden ; but, guard it and prize it as they may, it shall be the scene of tragedy. It contains a sepulchre.

The generous and aspiring youth seems, indeed, to stand on the border of a land that will never lose its morning freshness. As yet no disappointment has dampened his ardor. His pulse throbs with enthusiastic resolve. In thought he walks amid unfading bowers, and sees the grapes of joy ripen for his hand. But this radiant landscape contains a tomb. He does not see it, attracted by so much that enamours his gaze ; but it is there, a new tomb, and it shall not be vacant long. For, as the years pass on bearing him to manhood, does the garden seem as redolent of life as it did ? The rude feet of care have trampled down many a blossom, and decay has touched something that once seemed very fair. Aye, there apart, doubtless, is the grave of what seemed too lovely to be buried,—glorious hopes, feelings that once warmed into being many a grand design, and aspirations that withered in the hot glare of an unsympathizing world. Who shall tell how much is confined there ? Behind the stone that is rolled against the

door, who of you, my friends, does not know that something precious lies cold and still?

But, as regards the experience of practical life, where is the garden without a grave? It is not merely the man who has fallen from a prosperous fortune to obscurity and penury that has a sepulchre over which to mourn. There are tombs in the garden of the rich, the gifted, and the great. Baffled purposes, alienated friendships, exhausted energy, the corpse of many a brave endeavor, the lost inspiration of eager manhood when the path to victorious life seemed garlanded with light, — all this, and more, speaks of death. And so in the great world of action everywhere men feel, as the years vanish, that something dear has passed to the burial. With all their success, they are conscious of painful change and decay. They have not gained all that they sought. They are not what they expected, and perhaps strove, to be. Shrouded now in darkness and silence are the images of a happier or a better life. They have a sense of absence, which the sight of all their possessions and honors cannot relieve. And how often does the gloom of the sepulchre shadow the fair treasures that they have gathered around them! In all the ardors of life they are confronted with the dread solemnities of death.

But sadder still is the tomb in the garden of the affections. If any thing on earth is sacred, it is home, with its hallowed privacy, its joyous intimacies, its endearing and pure attachments. This is not the place to look for gloom. Yet the sepulchre is here; and it will

not be empty long. Though no dark omen for the present overshadow it, still sad change finally comes. There is a vacant place by the hearthstone. A smile has passed away, and voices that gladdened the soul. That home may be pleasant still, and the casual visitor, in the sight of its delights, may not think that it contains a place of burial. Yet, though the spot is sealed, it is not forgotten. To be sure, the great world goes on as before the sorrow came. Hands are busy, and the brain active, and the heart holds closer its remaining treasures. There is carefulness in the household, and life takes hold perhaps earnestly of temporal interests, and so the garden of home may seem to bloom again ; yet over against it stands the sepulchre. Bereaved hearts know it is there ; and oh, how they linger at times around it, how they return to it when none know the burden of their memories ! Face to face with all human prosperity, with all the throbbing pulsations of life, is the place and reality of death. That lone man, who in the fierce struggle of existence has, to the observer's eye, become indurated to feeling and sentiment, could doubtless lead you to a green mound that is still moistened with his tears. The cypress shades many a scene that seems to some all sunshine. Time has borne away the freshness and buoyancy of life. There is grief over the living lost,—the wayward and erring ones that filial tenderness could not melt, nor gracious tutelage restrain. In the garden is the sepulchre. If you are full of youthful enthusiasm, it is there. If you are struggling for a true and strong and useful life, it is there. It is there if you

are dowered with opulence and power. And it is well that it should be so ; well that we learn our frailty, our ignorance, our sin ; well that we be disciplined and educated, according to God's methods, for our eternal home. For with man's sinful nature and tendencies how fearful might be his career in transgression, and how reckless his presumption upon the forbearance of God, did he never *suffer* from the evil within and without him ! Now, on every hand, he is taught his insufficiency as he stands alone. He finds that he has a nature that cannot be satisfied with visible possessions, and that his life is meaningless and incoherent if interpreted by this state of being alone. Ever in his baffled efforts and his physical weakness, in the greatness of his plans and the smallness of his achievement, he is reminded of a sphere of being where the hindrances to his happiness and holiness shall be removed. So, reading his sad experiences by the light of the ever-blessed gospel, he knows they are wise teachers for his guidance here, and prophets of the glory that awaits the obedient and believing. And oh ! if in the faith of Jesus he is following on, through the Spirit of all Truth, to the deeper knowledge of his fellowship and love nothing that is precious now in the grave shall be lost.

It is the power of this conquering Saviour over death and the grave that makes our Easter joy so pure and full. Upon the sublime truth of His resurrection depends our everlasting welfare ; round this stupendous reality revolve all the permanent and exalted interests of life. In the garden was a new sepulchre : there laid

they Jesus. But this Jesus has God raised from the dead, whereof, says St. Peter, we are witnesses. Mary saw Him as she turned away weeping from the empty tomb. The hearts of the two disciples who journeyed to Emmaus burned within them as He talked with them by the way. More than once to the astonished apostles He appeared, with words of authority and love. Thomas thrust his hand into the spear-mark in His side, and with his fingers felt where the cruel nails had pierced His hands. He ate with His friends of fish and honey on the seashore. Five hundred brethren saw Him at once, and recognized their Lord. And, after the gracious ministries of forty days in Galilee, He disappeared from their sight. All the ancient prophecies respecting His sufferings and death were fulfilled. The work of His humiliation and mercy was accomplished. The grave could not hold Him. Dying, behold, He lived. The demonstration of the divine good-will was complete. An expiring Saviour, a risen Lord ; a suffering Servant, a King of Glory leading captivity captive ; a victim of the world's evil, a Redeemer from all transgressions ; cold and silent in the grave, and in the might of His divine nature pushing back the bolts of death and vanquishing the King of Terrors ; bearing in His innocence the burden of a sinful race, and opening the gates of everlasting life to the redeemed who come to Zion,—henceforth it was “Jesus and the resurrection” that made the gospel a power on the earth. The dark wall that seemed to enclose this brief existence was broken down. Life meant something glorious in the light of

the cross and the empty sepulchre. Though its burden was heavy and its paths rough, it could bear a divine interpretation. After all, man might be saved in body and soul. He was not born to perish like the brute, with all His aspirations and loves. So apprehending, through the spirit of Jesus, the LIFE that was given for him, he feels that the resurrection which is begun within him is the pledge of the glorious one to come. For that sense of blessed possibilities in the thrilled and exultant soul, that peace which deepens in sweet communion with the Lord, that hold of the heart on spiritual reality which has about it no odor of the grave,—the ardors, the hopes, the affections which are born in the embraces of a conquering and undoubted faith,—these tell not of death, but of life,—pure, joyous, winged life. And so what is written in the Scripture of the fruitions of the sanctified is corroborated in the experience of the soul that is more and more transformed into the likeness of Christ the Lord. There is already the foretaste of immortality.

So, my friends, the grave in the garden, to such a one, is not a place of everlasting stillness and decay. The stone shall be rolled away. If you have died unto sin, and are buried with Christ in His death, you shall rejoice in the final resurrection of all that can contribute to the bliss of the soul in the eternal kingdom. You know now how hard it is to wait in the loneliness of a bereavement that casts such a shadow on your path. But patience can have its perfect work as you look forward to the reunions of the blest. To think of the per-

petual peace that shall there abide, the divine security which nothing evil can invade, the circle there that shall never be broken, the light on the face of Infinite Love that shall never go out, the rest and beatitude of that unmolested home where all that is dear is gathered safe in the arms of God,—to even think of this now is like a strong inspiration to lift us above the world. Yes, there shall be no death there: Jesus has conquered death, and in the great resurrection those who are His while in the flesh will Jesus bring with Him. No matter where they slept, or what the changes that have passed on the mortal part that was dissolved, they shall put on their glorified bodies, and enter the habitations prepared for them from the foundation of the world. There no tomb shall be closed. There hearts shall never ache for those who return no more. There none shall bear the cross of secret trial. No evil tongue and no cruel hand can be there. There shall be no crying, nor any more pain; no guile of the Tempter to seduce, and no sinful nature with which to contend. Jesus shall lead them to the still waters of His perfect peace. From His face shall shine the light in which shall blossom all their bliss. Sweeter shall be their joy as they rise to clearer apprehensions of His beauty, and are drawn into the intimacies of a more transporting fellowship. If now you are His by a spiritual resurrection to the knowledge of His love, what may you not anticipate in the abounding blessedness of your immortality?

But how dark is your prospect if you do not believe upon His name, nor love His appearing! The sepulchre

in the garden of your life is then the symbol of the death which awakens to no celestial fruition. Out of Christ, you lose all that can make your immortality glorious. The day of the full liberation of the blest from the thraldom of the grave shall be the day of your wretched doom. Oh, day of sorrowfullest sorrow to the wicked,—day of triumphant joy to the sanctified! The grave cannot hold them. Their garden no longer contains a sepulchre. Death himself is swallowed up in victory. The immortal shores are gained. We see Jesus as He is. Only a little longer, faithful heart, have you to wait: a few more nights of trial; a few more graves closed in the garden; a little more watching by the tomb; the cross borne a little further; a few more drops tasted from the cup of the Lord's sorrow; heart and hope drawn a little more closely to Him,—and then the unfettered life, the resplendent glory, the full joy of seeing Him face to face who redeemed you and loves you, and of abiding with Him for ever. “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”
“We shall all be changed.” — I COR. xv. 41, 42.

XI.

THE SPIRITUAL BODY.

IT is a conscious and happy existence after the death of the body of which we desire the strongest certitude. The subject of the resurrection has no significance, no interest to us, except as identified with continued and exalted life. If there can be no future being without the carnal resurrection,— I mean a literal, physical, atomic resurrection of the body that dies,— then, rather than give up our belief in immortality, we will accept *that*, for the belief in immortality is not to be abandoned. But if such a reality of future existence is promised as meets the needs and wants of the soul without a carnal resurrection, then what is the advantage of it? Why should it be so strenuously insisted on by any who accept the gospel? In this matter we must take the divine word, and not what is advocated by fanciful or mistaken theologians. There is no subject of our holy faith that has been treated in a more repulsive, irrational, and unscriptural way than that of the resurrection of the dead. Statements have been made about it not only in conflict with all that is known of the word and methods of God, but at which the best spiritual instincts revolt. The whole analogy of Scripture, the requirements of science, and the demands of

the religious nature, are satisfied in the glorious view enunciated by St. Paul.

Those who insist that the resurrection means the restoration of gross matter, are always getting back to the idea of flesh and blood. But this the Apostle explicitly denies: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Now the identical body which is laid in the grave, atom for atom, shall be perfectly restored, or it shall not. If restored, then the body must be exactly as it was at the moment of death. If glorious and immortal existence is secured to the Christian, under new conditions suited to the nature and needs of the soul, then what perishes by death will not be wanted. And this is what the gospel assures us, and what we cry for in our sins and sorrows.

We are to accept the truth that our nature is constituted for the sphere of being in which it is placed, and its uses there. What is the fact of our present state? We have an immaterial intelligence and a material body,—"a terrestrial body," and its "glory is one." It is good, and wonderful, and fitted for its present condition and service. No better vehicle for the soul, here in the realm of physical things, can be conceived than a healthy, human body. Yet it wears out and dies. What is the fact of the eternal state? We shall have an immaterial soul, and a "spiritual body,"—a "celestial body," whose "glory is another." "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Because this mortal body is precisely what is wanted for our present existence, it is no evi-

dence that it is what is adapted to the glorified and eternal state. Indeed, unless that state is to be a condition just like this one, where being will be repeated under exactly the same circumstances, we can have no possible use for such a body: it would be a hindrance and clog. That such a carnal resurrection as is taught by some is incredible, I shall not argue at length; yet a glance at a few facts may not be inappropriate.

In the first place, the body is constantly changing by virtue of the process of nutrition, and we wake every morning with a body differing from the one with which we went to sleep. The man who lives to the age of seventy years has had his body renewed at least ten times during this period. Now, which of these bodies, or what part of each, shall he have in his resurrection, if the *identical* atoms once in his mortal frame, amounting to ten times the matter of one, were gathered up for an immortal body? Suppose he takes what is his body at the moment of his dissolution, then he must eternally have what was characteristic of it at that time. If we hold to the atomic theory, we must be consistent, rigorously so, or we give up the principle. So, if the man dies, terribly maimed, or loathsomey diseased, or emaciated to a skeleton, or blistered and charred by fire,—whatever his appearance,—he must be so for ever, particle for particle, in exact juxtaposition, quality, and quantity. If it is a material restoration, it must be accurate, if it be at all.

But, perhaps it is answered, God will give what was peculiar to the best condition and aspect of the body,—

to the most perfect health. Will He? What then? Some never know what it is to be well; their lives are protracted amid suffering. Some are hideously deformed, monstrosities, hateful to themselves, and objects of pity from their entrance into the world. Would these like to wear their ugliness for ever? Ask those who limp with painful steps through life; ask those whose years are blighted by incurable disease; ask the crippled, the bed-ridden, the palsied, the deaf, and dumb, and blind, and insane,—if they could understand the question,—if there is any period of their lives when they would wish to have the body that they wore their eternal tabernacle,—if they do not long for what is fair and comely, and superior to all evil change? How could the promise be true that “all tears shall be wiped away,” that “there shall be no more curse,” if the identical bodies, with identical disease and deformity clinging to them, were restored? No wonder that St. Paul greatly wished to put off this fleshly vesture, and prayed that mortality might be swallowed up of life. It was not this “flesh and blood” that he desired to be clothed with, but “the house from heaven,” — the spiritual body.

But, further still. Change is the great law of nature. There is no absolute annihilation, but the same constituents of things serve in their turn many purposes, and in different combinations work benign and gracious ends. The human bodies that decay only vanish to reappear in other forms in the grand economy of the universe. They mingle with the elements. They live

in the ocean of the atmosphere. They circulate in the sap of the tree. They swell in the bud. They tint the flower. They enrich the pulp of the grain. They become ingredients of animal life, and still pass and flow on according to the divine ordination. And so it comes, in the great procession of life, that what has been a portion of the body of one has had a place in many. It has served for thousands, perhaps millions, of years, but in the end it has a definite locality. Now, as an atom or any aggregation of atoms can be in one place only at the same time, whose will the material be in the general restoration, if each body claims the exact constituents which belonged to it in time? For perhaps hundreds had once the same atoms in their mortal frames. When one can tell how twenty suits can perfectly furnish a hundred men, then he can answer this question, and explain how a part of a thing is equal to the whole.

These suggestions, instead of discrediting the resurrection as St. Paul asserts it, only support and illustrate it. To appeal, as some do, to the power of God as the last resort in the maintenance of an atomic restoration of our physical bodies, seems both presumptuous and illogical. The question is not about the *power* of God, — though He can never contradict himself, — but the *will* of God. He has power to do what He does not and will not perform. He could make harvests ripen without our planting and tilling. He could replenish the mines of iron and gold that have been exhausted. He could make our city beautiful with structures more

superb than human hands can raise. He could translate us so that we should not see death. In innumerable ways He could do what He never will do. For He works in harmony with His perfect nature according to the laws that are inherent in Himself.

Now, just what the religious nature craves is assured in the resurrection of the just. We want to exist, and this is certified. As in Adam we die, so in Christ we shall be made alive. But what is that in which resides the consciousness of life? It is not the body, nor emotion, nor thought. Says Griffith: "That which I call *myself* is not a mere congeries of thoughts, but something which has these thoughts, to which they present themselves, in which they converge, and from which they emerge. I mark myself as one and indivisible in contradistinction from the world, from the body, and from mind, the object of consciousness." Butler says: "Our gross organized bodies are no more a part of ourselves than any other organized matter around us." Plato, in closing an argument on this point, affirms: "The man being neither the body by itself, nor any compound of body and soul, must either be nothing at all, or else that one thing in which mastery resides," meaning the soul. Professor Rollinstone declares: "A man is one thing, his mind another, his body a third. Although they both belong to him, they are no more the man himself than his horse or his dog." The Scriptures corroborate all this. The body is likened to a scabbard,—"I was grieved in my spirit in the midst of its sheath;" to an earthly domicile,—"we dwell in houses

of clay ;" to a tent, — "our earthly house of this tabernacle ;" to clothing which shall be exchanged for a better garment, — "desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." So *mind* is distinguished from the *man*. "What man knoweth the things of a man save the *spirit* of a man which is in him," that is, *himself*. "With the mind *I myself* serve the law of God." All the phenomena of consciousness, as much as the world without us and the body around us, are affections, movements, manifestations of the simple self, but are not themselves that self. The continuance of selfhood is what makes our existence.

But we want a life that shall so serve its purpose as to fulfil the end of its creation, and this is assured in the resurrection of the just. The Ego, the I, with all that pertains to the soul, needs organs for its use and service. And a body is promised, — a body we need and desire, which shall be as perfectly adapted to the soul and its sphere, as is the present body to this condition. But this present body is the "terrestrial," the "mortal" one. It has its office and its honor; but its glory is peculiar to its use in this world. The glory of the "celestial" is another. Its texture, its capabilities, its sphere will be different from this. "For we shall be changed." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." There can be no such assumption of the spiritual and the undecaying without the putting away of that which is material and decaying. We shall bear the image of the heavenly.

But do you ask, How, then, is the identity of the individual preserved? The answer has been already suggested. The identity of a person does not depend simply upon the amount and position of a certain number of material particles. Change is constantly going on in everybody, and yet the personality remains. Your child has changed in looks and knowledge, and yet it is yours. You, too, have lost your bloom and strength, and yet your selfhood is not destroyed. With your resurrection body your proper identity will not be impaired. That is your body through which the soul expresses itself, which is the instrument of its thought and will. We cannot describe the new body any further than to say that it will be fitted to us as perfectly as is this mortal body for its service here ; only its state will be higher, its uses more glorious. You need have no fear of not knowing those you love. For what about their appearance now is most expressive to your hearts? Is it so much weight, color, physical force, or the meanings that look out of the soul, — the smile, the tone, the light of the face, the indescribable air? Perhaps that babe will have grown to manhood or womanhood before you see it again, that friend have caught new beauty in the Paradisiacal clime, the radiance of purer affection fill those loving eyes. But whatever the change, "you will know and be known." The familiar voice will be recognized, sweeter doubtless, yet the dear old voice with the accents of heaven in its tones. The expression that meant so much to you on earth will only be lovelier still. The winsomeness of that child that you put

away amid the summer blossoms, and the charm of that dear presence that you missed so sadly, will greet you again. Not a line that is characteristic of the real personality shall be effaced.

But what is so glorious is the permanence of this existence. The body "is sown in weakness,"— ah, how weak!— but "is raised in power." The spiritual body is immortal. Evil cannot touch it. A great proportion of human affliction is connected with the body. How many are infirm from birth, life-long martyrs to disease, which darkens the earth and kills their joy. Think of the great multitude who are smitten, and the manifold ills that crowd the path of their decay. There is not a house unvisited. You who have suffered in this way, and have seen your friends suffer, who know what the sick-room means, and the infirmities that weary and discourage and hinder the cunning of hand and brain, you need not be told of the desirableness of a body untouched by disease, and elastic with an immortal vigor. And this is assured the Christian when the mortal puts on immortality. There shall be no more crying or pain, no failing pulse, and aching heart, or breathless remains. The former things are passed away.

But more than this. Here we realize not only the sufferings of the body, but its inadequacy in achieving ends that seem to be intimated in our highest estimate of life. We are confined in a certain sense by the limitations of the flesh. A heaviness resulting from a morbid physical condition often lies upon the soul. The mind suffers eclipse through bodily injury. Then, too,

when most gloriously uplifted in spirit, we feel that these clay walls interfere with our clearer illumination, with a liberty, and apprehensions that seem possible, under more favorable conditions, to the soul. It is in harmony with the nature of things to believe that by a higher and finer organization, a more spiritual vehicle, we could enter into a more profound communion with what is divine, could do more that is useful and joy-giving, and rise to an experience of what is now seen only in glimpses in the more ecstatic states.

Now, it is likely that the spiritual body will have just those capabilities that fit it for higher discoveries, uses, and enjoyments than are possible here. We shall be changed, and made like Christ's glorious body. Of His resurrection body we know but little, but in its power to appear and disappear, to seem tangible, and at the same time to be unobstructed in its movement by material things, in its swiftness of transit from place to place, and its various phases of appearance, we have the key to its wondrous character and possibilities. For the human soul to have a vesture like His is evidence enough that all that is needed for its noblest service and enjoyment will be provided.

In the present body, as I have said, we are conscious often of being embarrassed, hindered, cabined, held back in the effort to climb and enjoy. But with the immortal one, what may not be the glorious realizations of life? No doubt veils will be taken away from sights of surpassing loveliness. No doubt clogs will be removed that restrained us from a higher communion

with the Infinite. No doubt the spiritual sense will have keener sagacity, the affectionate nature richer play, the mind a grander power of insight and appropriation. I suppose that the activities that are put forth then in the high ardors of intelligence and enjoyment will be in a direction accordant with the noblest opportunities of the soul ; that all the movements of the heart will be right, that the vision of God, the apprehension of the Eternal Love, will be more glorious and ravishing than any thing it is possible for us to know on earth. As progress is the great law of being, we have the right to think that the fruitions of life will be more manifold and satisfying, and that the blessed ones shall illustrate in their looks, their activities, and their knowledge more and more that reflects the glory of the infinite Goodness. We might attempt to portray the new splendors admitted by the finer texture of the spiritual body, the closer intimacies of immortal friendships, the strange loveliness beaming out of souls bathed in God's pure light, and their joy in the consciousness of everlasting possessions and securities. But it is only the general facts that we are assured of,—as to details we know absolutely nothing. It is enough that we shall be changed,—this vehicle of the soul shall be like Christ's own glorious body, suited to its place and destiny. All shall live. But while some shall shine as stars for ever and ever, others shall come forth to contempt and shame.

So it is *life* of which we are assured by our victorious and risen Lord. Easter is the great festival of life, and all its joyful significance centres here. When we are

most truly ourselves, in purest and happiest moods, the sense of life and its blessing is very precious. Conscious of what is sweet, and gracious, and beautiful in existence, you do not want your *self* to be obliterated. The thought of being put away from the sights of the fair earth, to thrill no more with the delights of noble endeavor, to rejoice no more in dear companionships and inspiring knowledge, and to gaze entranced no more on the divine perfections, is hateful to you. You want to live on and on, freer, happier, stronger, wiser, of course, but you want to live ; and the symbols and intimations of life are all around you. You feel it in the genial air, the fragrant morning, the bird that sings, the flower that looks laughingly up in the April sun, in the glee of children,—yea, in the deep wells of your inmost self. And now, at this fresh season, as Nature is rehabiting herself in garments of beauty, and things fair and pleasant bring back to memory so much that has sweetened your years, you hear as gladly as ever the voices of life. But, ah ! there are voices that you do not hear. There are hands that you touch no more. There are faces that you loved to look upon that have passed away. And you know that you too must vanish from this scene after a little space. But is this the end ? Are no fairer landscapes to smile around you ? Are you never to gather up the golden links of knowledge and friendship that were broken here by death ? Are you to walk no more amid the beloved and holy ones as of old ? Are the great, choice treasures of the soul to be spilled beyond recovery ? Is Christ to be no longer

dear? Is life to shake down its ripe, delicious fruits for you in no more radiant clime? Is there no heavenly Father to receive you to His everlasting arms? Ah! you cannot accept the realm of blank and nothingness as yours. You spurn the dark negations of the materialist that deny to the soul life and home and joy. Your being springs forward in its mighty yearnings for life. Your heart runs on hungrily for the fruitions of the eternal ages. You grasp lovingly the assurance of the Redeemer's victory over death. You see your supreme desires met in the great and precious promises: "I am the Resurrection and the Life;" "and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;" "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying;" "and there shall be no more curse;" "and there shall be no night there," "for the Lord God giveth them light;" and they shall see His face,—the Love that filleth all; they shall be like Him, "and His name shall be in their foreheads;" "and they shall reign for ever and ever." This is the great Easter of Eternity. How easy to believe it all where the soul has risen with Christ to newness of life. The decaying vanishes. Evil dies. Sorrow and sin are left behind. Mortality is swallowed up of life. In the spiritual body you abide, and your joy is full.

“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” — HEBREWS xiii. 14.

XII.

PALINGENESIS.

THE Easter-tide continually speaks of the cheerful aspects of life, and the season of the year itself wherein it falls is a season of brightness and promise ; and so naturally our thoughts are turned to topics that have the Easter light upon them. There is something in the returning sweetness of spring-time that is quietly inspiring to every one, and to the heart that takes the meaning of the living Christ into the realities of awakening nature, the suggestions of life are peculiarly encouraging and impressive. One aspect of our existence here is always saddening, from the fact that it is a suffering condition, and apparently a perishable one. What we call the evils of the world are manifold ; and, after an experience of them, comes inevitable death. But to regard merely the pains and griefs of mankind — disease, decrepitude, burial — is by no means a fair sight of it. There is quite another view from this, and even what seems so afflictive has a better interpretation than that which appears on the surface. The whole tendency of creation is upward, — the march of being is not to death, but to higher life. Amid decay, catastrophes, dissolution, and apparent annihilation, there is renewal, progress, an exaltation, which transcends the state that is passed. No one can take a calm and pro-

found survey of the world without being struck with the constant steps of a dying and a living, a burial and a birth, whose resultant is something better than before. All that bears the image of death is not absolute destruction. The throes of painful effort are the throes of life. As far back as the eye of science can track the processes of change which constitute creation, it is plain that the steps are forward, not backward. The new is ever coming out of the old. There is a gain in the fulness and excellence of life. The fluid splendor of the primeval earth, yet landless and lifeless, was higher than the vaporous mass out of which it sprang. The reign of pristine storm and convulsions, during which the crust of the earth cooled for the foundations of its first inhabitants, was better than the incandescent globe. And when there were waters and lands, vegetation and animal life, the reality was nobler than the awful scenes of tempest and cataclysm of the anterior stage. And so on through the cycles of physical being that have ensued since the upheavals of the continents and the existence of mankind, though there has been so much decay and death, there is a constant movement to stages higher and more perfect. It is true that vast wildernesses of vegetation have perished, but their vitality has resurrection in the coal measures that contribute to the utilities of mankind. The microzoa, the infinitesimal infusoria, and the nummulites in mountainous masses, have passed to their burial, making solid rocks of enormous dimensions. Paris is built of these nummulites ; so are the pyramids and the sphinx. Dead animalculæ make

gigantic mountain ranges and widely pave the depths of seas. And the rocks themselves disintegrate, and great forests die, but the result is the soil in which fruits and grains are produced for food.

The highest form of life that we are permitted to know is human life, and its history in a large view is a record of progress. The difference between the barbarian and the Christian saint is tremendous, and yet the highest form of manhood only shows what humanity is capable of, under favorable conditions. The point that has been reached by the most advanced peoples has come by leaving the injurious and unprofitable, and using methods better, wiser, and more divine. With clearer truth, with more knowledge, with larger facilities, the race has advanced, yet its steps are marked all along by battles and burials. But out of conflict has come strength. From painful experiences has been acquired a sagacity to mitigate their severity. There has been a continual emergence from the bondage of superstition and slavery toward light and freedom. All along there has been a gain in useful knowledge, in government, and religion. The usages that were once terrible and destructive, the follies of opinion and custom, the evils that harass and cripple life, are more and more overcome and buried. Even the great convulsions of kingdoms and the downfall of dynasties have contributed to set the race forward. Of course we cannot discover progress except by the comparison of aspects of mankind at wide intervals of time. We see the most offensive features of the present, and our consideration of

near individual cases of moral turpitude and wickedness is apt to prejudice our judgment as to the general condition. While there is sufficient now in the vices and miseries of mankind to shock our hearts, and to urge our solicitude into practical endeavor, a fair sight of the facts of remoter ages tends to assure us that an improvement in every vital interest has been realized.

When we come to the individual who is using the light that favors him, we still note the encouraging tokens of life that is advancing. On the surface is much, it is true, that indicates a hard allotment; for whose life is quite free from besetment? The spectacle is confessedly an affecting picture, and the lookout, to all, is sad sometimes. The questions with many who have had a severe experience are these: Is life really a boon? Are its joys a compensation for all its pains, burdens, tribulations? There glow and vanish the youthful fervors in which faith is so strong, and the heart so sincere. The splendid anticipations that inspired early effort perish. Aspiration leads on and on, but where is the full attainment? The royal hopes of a pure ambition fail. There are experienced defeats, humiliations, alienations, hostilities. The sacred places of affection are darkly invaded. Broken friendships strew the past. Great vacancies are made in home. There seems to be, in the cases of some, no end to disaster. And so with cares, worryments, sorrows,—one thinks, perchance, What does it all avail? Will there ever be any thing better? How many, as their years increase and their cares get heavy, make this inquiry in the silence of

their own mind, while they still continue to plod on in their daily pursuit, saying nothing of their depression? The music and enchantment of life are gone. Its distant horizon is dark.

Now, without ignoring facts like these, life still has its hopeful features and encouraging reality. It is ordained to go on, but, as in every thing else, there has to be a dying for a living. The heats of youth moderate, but they have given an impulse to character and endeavor. In the radiance of high dreams are conceived strong purposes to do and conquer. With the decline of hope and enthusiasm there is a residuum of valuable experience and rugged strength that would not have been without the incited activity. A tougher fibre of will and endurance is born in hardship. So in the steps that mark the soul true to Christ and the law of life, there is not absolute loss as its journey proceeds, but gain. The foundations are laid for a better superstructure. All the forces of good that have had influence continue to work, though, it may be, in different ways. You have buried, it seems to you, a good deal that once was precious ; and, thinking over what you were, you lament now the absence of the fresh emotion, the bounding pulse, the elastic spirits, the holy enthusiasm, the glow of high pursuit, that once were yours, when life seemed fair. But if you have maintained your Christian fidelity, there has been no actual loss. Without that ardor and affection and sympathy with the pure and true, you would not be what you are now. You carry along with you the gains of affection and faith and

duty and virtue, as the great globe carries the harvests of all its changes in itself. The structure of your real being is thus built up, and if it could be analyzed, and put under the powerful lenses of spirit, it would show the resultants of the aspiring heart and the teeming brain, the raptures of prayer and the communion of life with God. All this gives the tints and tones and aptitudes and qualities of being that have come through years of experience and a following of the Master. The life of all that was good in thought and possession is there yet, and you take it on whither you go. The outward man perishes, fades, changes, dies ; the inward man is renewed day by day. Life goes forward gathering, in the divine love, more and more that enriches it, and sure of the restoration of what seems perhaps extinct. Not a breath of happiness has come to you in vain. No friendly communion with a pure and true soul has been unfruitful. You have been moved by no holy ardors, and been the subject of no blessed vision of divine reality, without profit. None of the struggle and the faith of your best moments has been unavailing. The love that enabled you to minister patiently, and to endure submissively, wrought a finer texture in the soul. The inward man is renewed day by day in fellowship with the good, in its hospitality to heavenly disclosures, as the gracious spirit quickens and the heart rejoices in the blessed Comforter. As you are drawn out more in sympathies that make you tender and helpful to the needy ; as in the sight of glorious examples you are stirred to emulate them ; as your nature takes hold of

the deep truths of Jesus with a gush of gratitude ; as the purity and grace of lives that are dearest give you refreshment, and so, being separated more and more from the base and bad, made stronger to do and suffer, and still firmer in your hold upon the eternal life,—you are experiencing a gracious renewal. You are getting nearer the Lord of life. A taint is passing away. There is an inflowing of strength and peace. Patience is having its perfect work. The spirit of the Master deepens within, and whatever is sweet and pure in your possession is due to Him.

Of course you cannot remain here always in the body. This is not your continuing city, but you seek one. You want an everlasting refuge,—home, security, rest, a heavenly joy. And the way is open to it. The vitalities of the spiritual life do not and cannot perish. The poet Longfellow, giving voice to the heart that realizes that time has taken away so much that gave life its charm and freshness and delight, breaks out in lofty song :—

“‘ Oh give me back,’ I cried, ‘ the vanished splendors,
The breath of morn, and the exultant strife,
When the swift stream of life
Bounds o’er its rocky channel, and surrenders
The pond, with all its lilies, for the leap
Into the unknown deep ! ’

“ And the sea answered, with a lamentation,
Like some old prophet wailing, and it said :
‘ Alas ! thy youth is dead !
It breathes no more, its heart has no pulsation ;
In the dark places with the dead of old
It lies for ever cold ! ’

“‘Then,’ said I, ‘from its consecrated cerements
I will not drag this sacred dust again,
Only to give me pain ;
But, still remembering all the lost endearments,
Go on my way, like one who looks before
And turns to weep no more.’”

There is, indeed, no occasion for weeping when we look before with that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. Nothing vanishes for ever that gives loveliness and purity to the soul. Even the tints and odors and beauty of things most evanishing to the eye touch us not in vain. As the good and dear are buried out of your sight, as youth dies, as the years bear you on to trial and pain, you are carrying onward, if walking with the Master, more and more that shall bloom again and adorn your larger life when mortality is all swallowed up. And so, looking out on the opening season, on the faces of children that cling to you, and of friends that are true ; thinking over the days of your vanished prime, and the joys which came so often in a loving service that you have not strength to render now,—you are not to grow sad as if all that were gone for ever, as if you were mocked by a loveliness that you could not keep, as if the kernel of existence were almost consumed, and soon all would be as if you had not been. No ; you are not to look at things in this way,—you cannot, indeed, in the tender and unerring sympathy of Christ. The divine promises are all glorious of the hereafter. The instinct of the pious soul is to foreshadow the ages in the reaches of faith and affection. You have known some dead one, perhaps,

whose nature was rarely sensitive to all the gifts of life ; who, in the hours of her fading, told what she wished should be done when she could speak no more : how the white lilies of the valley were to lie in her folded hands on her bosom, and the violets were to be planted on her grave ; how she wished the hymns that were so dear in life sung again, though her lips were still, and those companions of her girlhood to gather beside her, and that pastor who had been her friend to say the holy service of the church as she was put away. What is such an expression but a conviction that life continues to be conscious,—but the heart projecting its faith and friendship beyond the grave ? And, verily, we may do this. The continuing city is beyond this one. The outward man decays, but the life renewed in Christ abides, where all will be better,—more blessed. So the light of Easter-tide that falls on your advanced age, or your afflicted homes, should not be sad, but very sweet. The spring blossoms, and the voices of singing-birds and of running waters, and the laugh of children, and the contentment of the household, are all enveloped in it. You do not leave the good and fair. The old friendship, the old visions of celestial beauty, the old voices, the old delight in duty and in holy devotions that so calmed and refreshed you,—all that woke in your heart gratulations, praise, and a blessed looking forward,—all are yours in the land where you go ; and with all are the better treasures of your Father's house.

*“The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing
of birds is come.”* — SONG OF SOLOMON ii. 12.

XIII.

THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS.

I SUPPOSE that no truly religious nature can look on the works of God without some sensibility to their significance. While every season has its peculiar interest, and while all nature is constantly unfolding its glorious and inspiring lessons, there seems something especially tender and affecting in the return of the spring-time, and the associations and suggestions connected with it. The change, from the rigors of winter to the softer airs and the budding luxuriance of the more genial season, is marked and forcible. Something more delicate than articulate speech invites us abroad, and wins us to pensiveness and hope. We are haunted by the indescribable sense of the great mystery of life that is unfolding in bud and flower, and pulsating the landscape that brightens beneath the sun. How confidently the frail plant puts forth its tendrils, and how gaily the young leaves wave in the amber light! With what serene order the hidden beauties of the forest, the grain of the fields, the pets of the garden, the stately monarchs of the grove, develop their foliage, and join the grand march of nature through the wondrous year? Watching this glorious transformation which goes on in the fair forms around us, and touched by

the sweet spell of fresh and outbursting life, it is not strange that the reverent Christian heart should catch a feeling quite in unison with the prophecies of all that is so bright and joyous in the world. Spring-time is indeed the season of hope. From the faint glow of the plant, from the exquisite fragrance of flowers, from the low notes of happy birds, we are taught to look forward for some better experience, some riper delight. We cannot, feeling that the Infinite Father is expressing His goodness in all that is so promising around us,—we cannot help making the pictures of life in the future a little more like the beauty that finds its way to the adoring mind. We feel that these scenes, which grow more attractive day by day, are the expressive symbols of a nobler state of being ; and so we let Hope take the rosy coloring of the season's cheerfulness. Especially is this so in our younger days, while as yet the rough journey of life is untried. Who, indeed, with a soul in any manner alive to the messages of God in His word or works has not, in early manhood or womanhood, felt the deep stirrings of spring-time, and gazed on brighter landscapes than any pictured to the outward eye ? Feeling, impulse, affection seemed to partake the freshness of the blossoming year. I do not now speak of disappointments which sooner or later fall upon the holiest of those who walk with God, nor do I seek now to explain the dark problems that are connected with our existence here, but I do say that it is a blessed thing that it is the privilege of man, especially in his younger days, to hope. Few, perhaps, would have courage to

pursue their painful toils and meet the shocks and trials before them, if they could see at one glance all that they may eventually suffer. It is a merciful provision that we are permitted, even while least prepared to bear a heavy burden, to take cheerful views of life, that only leaf by leaf the history of our experience is written, and that light falls on our future so far in the flush of early years, that the world is never wholly dark. Though with our advancing steps the scenery around us becomes more sober, and perhaps our path more difficult, the change is gradual, and for a space, at least, almost unheeded. As the spring glides into summer, and the summer into autumn, with stealthy pace, so do we insensibly pass from the freshness and promise of our brightest days. If the heart is teachable and devout, this early radiance that bathes it, this efflorescence of generous hopes, should not be regarded as vain and unprofitable. While the spring sun shines, it is meet that the most delicate tendrils should put forth, and that Nature should wear her gayest smile. So in the spring-time of life it is no marvel if the heart catch a corresponding glow, and blossom with a kindred luxuriance.

These early experiences of the hopeful, trustful, consecrated soul may be as important to a strong, noble, and fruitful life, as the light and bloom of May to the wealth and harvests of the year. If the soul be pure, and mindful of Him who speaks in many ways to His beloved children on earth, we need have no fear of sympathizing too deeply with the loveliness around us,

or of looking too hopefully on the best aspects of our strange existence. Let us feel the nearness and benignity of Him who "makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Him." Let us look on man with a trustful and generous interest. Let us kindle with the enthusiasm of holy aims and examples, and in all the earth behold the signs of a better and happier day. It is true that, after a time, the prospect will be overcast, and that stern trials will fall to our lot ; still, all the while we are learning something deeper and more precious than had we never been touched by the glory of what is brighter than we have attained. This is one of God's methods to lead on the believing and affectionate nature to a higher maturity and a nobler manhood. As the vigor of earthly life subsides, the obedient soul feels that its treasures are being gathered more securely within, and it clings with fonder grasp to that which cannot pass away.

But while the spring-time is peculiarly the season of hope, especially to the young, it is also, to those more advanced in life, a season of memory. With the dawning beauty of field and flower there are a thousand affecting associations. As time passes on, and the earth puts on her lustrous robes, we almost unconsciously compare our present experience with what has been. We turn back the book of memory to the pictures that once seemed so fair, and linger in thought about old paths that were rosy in our morning. Though hoping still, and feeling the voices of the year pass into our hearts, our hope is hardly like the old hope that quick-

ened our pulses days ago. All that we see now is connected with some history that is precious or instructive to us. Upon the reviving world falls some influence from the heart that was not there in former time. These green fields, these trees tinged with early garniture, these sprigs of bloom, these liquid tones and faint odors that penetrate the soul, have meanings that have been growing more expressive with each successive spring. As these come before us our life rises up again as it were from the past, and we stand with our separate selves as we have been in our most marked experience. And how much returns? There is not a generous hope, not a yearning for the divine perfection, not a sacred joy, not a tender sorrow, but is somehow linked with this season's beauty and blessing. We think of those who were with us in their youthful ardor who are now absent, or gathered to their rest. We recall the fervor of our trust in the Saviour when all nature seemed wearing a more celestial smile. We remember the kind hands that once planted the flowers by the door, or arranged them on the mantle with loving skill. We sit again by the couch of those who faded so calmly into the heavenly light, and linger again by the side of those who, pale and still and beautiful, can speak to us on earth no more. That cluster of bloom from the woods brings back volumes that made life sincere. These low bird-songs revive the rapture of a heart that saw God in all His works, and went out in praises that only the affluent music of the year could express. The commonest thing that creeps up from the mold is a memento

of something that is dear. Every show of the season is associated with a gladness that has departed, a trial that is overcome, or a hope that still beams on the future. I know that these fresh outgrowths of spring take a soberer meaning with those who have seen many seasons pass, but oh, how much is gathered up and embalmed in its morning glory, and how instructive are the suggestions that it brings to the consecrated and obedient soul! Let no man think that he has gained any thing on which to congratulate himself by ceasing to feel the gentle influences of the fair earth around him. Let none vainly imagine that they have grown more spiritually minded by an insensibility to the sights and sounds of this wondrous frame which we call nature, but which is an expression of God, our Father. I do not say that great excellence of Christian character may not exist with an almost utter blindness to the handiwork of the Highest, but such blindness is no proof of piety, and is not a legitimate fruit of it. The soul that receives most amply the divine light sees in its effulgence most that suggests and portrays the divineness of Him who is all in all. And the closer it is conformed to Christ the more open will it be to views of the glory and goodness of the King. That is not an enviable nature that hears no strange melodies hinting of Heaven through the mystic marches of the year, that sees no glorious signs hung out on earth and sky of an infinite love that is never forgetful and never unkind, that pauses not with reverent spirit to ponder the lesson that is told in grass and tree and flower, and that feels

no benediction in the bright air and the palpitating sky. He may be just to his neighbor, industrious and virtuous, yet he does not understand the meaning of Jesus in the fields of Galilee, pointing to the birds and lilies, and telling of our Father's care.

Some of the most vital experiences of the Christian are associated with the glorious world around him. Though age dispel the illusions of youth, and steal from his possessions much that once gave him delight, still there is sensibility left to what God has made so fair. One of the greatest of poets, who was at the same time a dutiful son of the church, in his advanced life, closes his magnificent "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," in these imperishable lines :—

"And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Think not of any severing of our loves.
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more perpetual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they.
The innocent brightness of a new-born day is lovely yet ;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, its fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Yes, and thanks to Him who gives the heart all its capabilities of insight and enjoyment. Nothing lovely

in all the circle of the year grows meaningless to those who live in the love of Him who pronounced good all that He has made. And yet how serenely nature moves on, whatever be the lot of man. The same bright things come up in the morning sunshine, though blight fall upon his affections. The same glory fills the heavens, though his soul be shaken with storms of sorrow. The very contrast of the spring's lustre and luxuriance with his own sad experience sometimes perplexes and depresses him. With that dear one fading by his side, with that cherished form cold and voiceless in the house, with a feverish pain in his spirit and haunted by a loneliness that finds no rest, it seems to him that the sun ought not to shine so brightly, that the groves ought not to be so gay, that there is mockery in the sweet voices and garish beauty of the earth and sky. Who has not felt this in seasons of peculiar trial? Yet calmly and grandly the order of nature went on. The light winds played with the tasselled trees and swaying vines. The rose and lily changed no hue. The waters frolicked and prattled, and ran dimpling down their verdurous ways. The clouds wantoned through the deep abysses, and caught on their gorgeous robes the golden light. The stars looked serenely from their majestic thrones, and day and night moved on with imperial pace, as if no heart were bleeding and no eyes blind with tears. And yet, after a little, when the anguish of emotion is past, how quietly, yet how tenderly, do all these glorious works of Omnipotence seem to speak,—suggesting a perpetual peace and a sympathy that touches the very

springs of life,—telling us, by their order, their repose, their loveliness, their undisturbed harmony of that which lies above fear and sorrow, even of Him who holds all things in the hollow of His hand. The devout soul is not taught to think that God changes on account of its temporary adversity, but it desires to be drawn up to a fuller apprehension and a nearer likeness to Him. The order of nature indeed will go on whatever our changes of feeling or desire. Even in our last moment, when we close our eyes on things visible, there will be the same ebb and flow of things as in our most joyous hours. There is, perhaps, a half hidden and vague feeling in the breasts of many that there will be something peculiar in the day when they see the last of earth. Perhaps they cannot tell exactly what, but still it hardly seems that every thing around can then be just the same as now. But, my friends, it will be one of those common days, such as we are accustomed to, on which we shall depart,—one of these common days unmarked by any sign more wonderful than of those we heed so little now. The same sun will rise and set, the trees wave, the birds sing, the harvests ripen, the stars glitter ; there will be the same buying and selling, coming and going, sorrowing and rejoicing, as now.

“The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom.”

But, thanks be to God, all this can make no difference to the sanctified and Christly soul. He who guides the

great universe has revealed Himself as our Father, and all the excellence of His works but faintly picture the exceeding riches and glory of that life to which He calls us in Jesus Christ, His Son, who, for us, has conquered death and unveiled immortality. O my friends, while this charming season is kindling our hopes and awakening old memories, and hinting of that boundless "love that keeps in its complacent arms the earth, the air, the deep," let us seek those spiritual treasures, that undecaying beauty of which the outward world is but the faint and imperfect metaphor!

WHITSUNTIDE.

*“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles.”* —ISAIAH
xl. 31.

XIV.

W I N G S.

THE real marrow of life is in its higher experiences.

The exultant moods are always the most joyous. We manage to endure a great deal that is disagreeable and depressing, if now and then come seasons of spiritual uplifting, moments of soul-glow and sunrise, when we are translated from the low flats of a dull earthly monotony to higher levels and better fellowships.

“They shall mount up on wings as eagles,” says the Prophet. This is our privilege. The soul is free. It has wings in the joy of pure emotion, in the upspringing might of faith, in the ardor of heavenly aspiration, in the swift flight of love, in the liberty of exultant hope.

With some these wings are often folded. They droop often through sheer weariness. They trail frequently in the dust. But again they shine in the clear air of cerulean heights. The sunlight of truth is on them. On their strong pinions life is held above defeats and woe. Making ample allowance for differences in temperament and scope of thought in individuals, the devout nature is not ignorant of blessed experiences that impel the soul onward,—sympathies, insights, ardors,—

refreshing and enriching to the hidden life. A few hints will awaken precious memories.

You remember how the spring odors of the tender-leaved woods seized your finer sense as you came forth from the place of prayer, and wafted your thought to the trees of Paradise ; and how, on the billowy splendors of indescribable sunsets, you were borne to the gates of light, which seemed uplifted, as if to welcome the King of Glory ; and how, on the mountain-top, as day flung its roses over the sky, and kissed the wide waters to crimson, you were borne afar ; and how, awed and ravished beneath the midnight stars, you seemed to wander through the eternal deeps amid the blossoming constellations, until you almost heard the sphery harmony, and touched the uncreated throne ! More than once, in the solitude and by the sea, amid the noon's delicious peacefulness, and when the fresh winds blew health and music out of the west, over leagues of prairie starred with unnumbered flowers, your heart overran with sacred emotion, and expanded to embrace the beautiful repose ! Wings were yours.

Then, too, after a season of spiritual depression, where you had gone mournfully with a sense of barrenness and burden, the painful spell was finally broken, and you seemed set in "a large place." Aye, your soul bounded outward into blessed light. Great freedom was yours, and you wondered why such doubt could have fettered the faith that now exults in the joyful confidence of a son beloved. And so, too, when the news of that dear friend's espousal of Christ reached you ;

when the darling child of many prayers went with you, for the first time, to the table of the Lord ; when the prodigal, who had made the house so sorrowful, came back with the glow of forgiveness on his brow ; and when, gathered around the old hearth-stone, at the family festival, the unutterable peace of God came down,—on what gracious wings were you upborne ! What refreshing renewal was yours !

You remember how, before now, you have come into the church, heavy, gloomy, discouraged, an evil world shadowing your hope, and life looking sepulchral and poor amid earth's losses and changes and delusions, and how hymn and psalm and confession and prayer have little by little stolen away your unrest, and then how the word of grace uttered from the depths of a prophetic soul flowed with healing and light and comfort to your heart, and how, on the wings of its benediction, you rose up stronger and clearer visioned, and went forth as on the landscape of a better world.

And so when the evil spirit of wrath and revenge was cast from you, and self conquered in granting forgiveness that linked your life in closer bonds to one estranged ; when, bowing in the great congregation where a thousand hearts went up in importunate supplication, or in triumphant *Te Deums* stormed heaven with praise, you rose on the wave of devotion, and when all at once the transcendent vision of Love incarnate and on the cross burst with illustrious glory on your soul, then there was no dull plodding in the way,—pinions were at your feet.

But it is in the closet, if you live nobly, that your strength is most graciously renewed. There, with the world put away, with faith resting serenely on the promise, while the place seemed instinct with a hallowing presence, you waited for your Lord. Nay, you waited with your Lord, for He came in and supped with you, and you with Him. On Him you emptied all your burdens and your sins. It was enough to feel the pulses of His peerless love, to see life's consummate ideal met in His perfection, enough to see every thorn of His crown of suffering blossom into celestial anadems, and to rest without a doubt in the tabernacle of His peace. Perhaps you are one who, in the wondrous disclosures of these hours, can say, "whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell."

We give grudgingly, we labor in heaviness, we minister painfully, we worship coldly, we live meanly, until the higher life is begotten within us,—until the soul gets a glow and an earnestness and a breadth of sympathy, and an impulse of high and pure aspiration, that make it a joy to do good. Love is always winged. If you would conquer your besetments, rise to a more gracious benevolence, enjoy a livelier consciousness of eternal things, and have your Christian duties delightful ; get the ardent, unselfish, consecrated haert of love, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Inspirer and Comforter.

It were easy to picture more in detail instances of these spiritual upliftings in the fervor of your first discipleship, in times of blessed awakening in the churches,

and in all your most precious experiences. But these are all revived as you recall the bright places of your pilgrimage. Through their impulse you have done your most genuine work for Christ, have had the clearest glimpses of the heavenly beatitude, and have gathered the choicest fruits of holiness. These experiences give the lie to an atheistic materialism. They strangle doubts of our immortality. They attest our divine relationship. In these illuminations the letter of Scripture delivers a grander and more inspiring meaning. In them we antedate the everlasting life.

“And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” — ACTS vi. 15.

XV.

S O U L - L I G H T .

WHEN Stephen stood before the Sanhedrim, accused, insulted, and exposed to imminent danger, it is said that those looking on him "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The inner light of his rapt and loving and holy soul beamed through the fleshly lineaments. His countenance glowed with the spiritual beauty of the celestial world. Though in this case we must concede a preternatural effulgence to the features of the martyr, still something akin to it is seen in all whose lives are the abodes of the Sanctifier. There is no such lasting and impressive beauty as that which adorns a nature rich in magnanimous sentiments and pure affections. The Truth, which satisfies and inspires the saintly life, modulates the tone, beams in the eye, trembles on the lip, and suffuses the face with the sheen of its unmistakable sincerity and grace.

Much, indeed, that is most characteristic in the individual is betrayed in the outward man. Let him be consumed by a ravenous greed ; let him be the slave of a grovelling lust ; let him nurse his resentments into a sullen hate, and wear the nettles of his irritating envies against his heart, and, in a cruel and consuming ambition, crush down the generous instincts of affection and

charity,—and the features of his true character shall flash out, in spite of his personal comeliness and most careful concealments.

That hungry look of avaricious cunning; that settled scowl on the remorseless brow; that habitual sneer, that becomes more significant when a rival is praised; that hard, defiant expression, from which children instinctively shrink; the gloating eye and mocking face,—tell, plainer than any words, the master-passion that reigns within.

No one of an observing turn has ever passed through the crowded thoroughfares of a great city without noting the fearful meanings that many faces reveal of lives that are wasted, darkened, and wofully astray. It is almost as if you heard, as they pass, “I am pursuing the victim of my lust or hate.” “Religion is a delusion which I spurn.” “I do not believe in virtue.” “I am bound to make my golden idol more magnificent.” “I live merely for pleasure.” “Hell is already burning in my heart.”

But if the spirit of evil, when sufficiently dominant, writes its significant characters on the countenance, so does the spirit of goodness in a halo of light. Out of the pure, the true, the devoted soul go the sign and token of its nobility. Few have failed to notice how in a rapture of unexpected delight one’s look is transfigured; how that which is ordinarily plain and uninteresting, in the exaltation of sublime sentiments, seems to vanish before the light flowing from within. So, where life is settled in a steadfast virtue, where the temper has

become sweet by the long discipline of resignation, where the atmosphere of the heart is holy and communion with the invisible world is unbroken,—there the inner spirit softens, irradiates, spiritualizes the outer man. That placid sweetness of the saint, that chastened radiance of the countenance, remains amid the changes of age and sorrow. You find it with those who were not born fair, and with those who have trod rough ways and tasted bitter trials. There are those to-day who go bowed with their infirmities, who are browned and scarred by unremitting toil, who carry the burden of unspoken griefs ; maidens who never expect to see another May on earth but this, and matrons whose wrinkled brows tell of years almost done ; pallid sufferers propped up on pillows to look once more on the green fields of spring and inhale its fragrant air ; and old men, who, having patiently done the Master's will, are ready to depart in peace, on whose faces is already the dawning radiance of the heavenly day. I enter the humble abode of one whose life has been a long struggle with poverty, and who yet, amid many opportunities to secure unrighteous gain, has never swerved from his integrity ; and as, looking away with the eye of faith to the better inheritance, he speaks of his heavenly treasures with the blessed assurance of a possession which he already begins to enjoy, I see in his smile a celestial beam. On my way amid the sick and wretched I meet a true angel of mercy, who daily brings to sad homes and obscure sufferers help and hope ; and, in the sweet sympathy that overspreads her face, and the patient

kindness that smooths her tranquil brow, I am reminded of those who minister on high. I listen to the trembling tones of this aged mother in Israel, as she recounts the story of her pilgrimage,—the precious refreshments of a way that was so often overshadowed,—the endearing fellowship of Jesus, when, in pain and bereavement, the world was bleak and dark ; and as, gathering the divine promises still nearer her heart, she seems to antedate the joy into which in a little time she shall pass, I see on her face, not the deep furrows of venerable years and the lost freshness of girlhood, but an immortal beauty that cannot die. I mingle with the multitude, and there is pointed out to me the Christian philanthropist, who has resolutely breasted the rude shocks of the world's conflict ; who, in the midst of hypocrisy and covetousness and wrong, has kept the high purpose of his youth to benefit his race ; and who, fired with the spirit of his Master, esteems it his highest honor to serve his “little ones,” without hope of a material reward : and there is visible on those benignant features — calm, open, and fearless in his confidence of truth's final victory — an illumination caught from the Light of Life. And, as I kneel by this dying saint, who, having in meekness and simplicity followed her Lord, and gathered into her consecrated affections the graces of His own character, now exclaims, “I am ready to depart,” while the smile of her lips, that just move in inaudible praise, tells of fruition begun, and the eyes that look upward are full of rapturous light, and the blessed awe of the place is as if the gate of

heaven were for a moment left ajar, I “see her face as it were the face of an angel.”

Thus it is that the inner spirit is reflected outwardly, and betrays its source. No loveliness on earth is equal to that which blossoms from the pure, generous, affectionate, and consecrated soul. All other beauty fades and perishes; but this is immortal, and will expand into rarer flower in the everlasting light above.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” — LUKE xxi. 33.

XVI.

W O R D S.

TO the untaught and unlettered nothing seems more substantial than the great globe and the majestic frame of things visible. But here really change and decay are most certain and unceasing. The adamantine rocks crumble. Continents gradually melt away. The stars go out in the infinite heavens overhead. Nothing is absolutely fixed in the material universe so that there continues permanence of form and constitution ; nothing is fixed here except the eternal laws by which change is effected and the divine order secured. Our earth itself has been for uncounted ages a theatre of mutation, which still goes on. From the attenuated gases of chaotic space, through the divine economy, at length came the firm earth and its manifold forms, prepared for the habitation of man. But at no time since the beginning was reached a period when all was stationary, to suffer no more change. Convulsion has followed convulsion. There have been upheavals of mountains and submergences of vast lands ; earthquakes and deluge ; volcanic fires and the dreadful desolation of arctic rigor; seas where now are fruitful prairies, and fiery floods, where bloom orchards and gardens ; while regions once

inhabited sleep beneath the ocean, and populous cities lie deep in awful graves. And still in these later ages the change goes on, imperceptible, it may be, to the busy tribes of men, except when some sudden catastrophe smites them with flood or fire,—yet surely, and with a ceaseless decay. Slowly, if you please, but with a certain march, the material universe approaches its dissolution. The time of the end will finally come. The heavens and earth are waxing old as a garment, and as a vesture the Lord shall fold them up. It is true that out of the old, new forms may be wrought by creative power ; but what our eyes behold, this fair earth with its sweet landscapes and glorious skies, its bright seasons and islands of delight, sun and moon and golden spheres, shall dissolve. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the truths of God endure, the words of Christ shall not pass away.

Christ's words are imperishable, from the nature of their source and character. It is not the letter, the printed symbol, or spoken sound, that has an eternity, but the spirit residing in the utterance, the verity of life that cannot perish.

Whatever is deepest in its significance to the soul, that communicates meanings of heart to heart, that interprets life and helps it, partakes this gracious and enduring nature. There are words that cheer you, comfort, inspire, yea, add fresh grace to your existence. And why? Because they bear a message of hope or love, because they touch the undercurrents of being with a renewing power, because in them comes a strength

on which your own can cling or rise. Take your sincerest experience, when you have been invigorated, or refreshed, or consoled, and what a blessing have true, earnest, hearty words been to you. The sympathy that was breathed while you were smitten by that sorrow ; the word of applause after that painful effort that you dreaded ; the assurance, while so many were suspicious, of a faithful soul that believed you true ; the encouragement of a friend, when you were most sadly disheartened,—how helpful were such expressions in your time of need ! Then, too, how you have been revived by the light flung out of magnetic souls in hours of their loftiest eloquence ; and how, from narrative and poem, from social converse and sweet song, has flowed into your being a refreshing stream replenishing dry places with the blossoms of delight. What helped you in that mood of discouragement, what quickened you in that hour of indecision, was the power of a life coming in contact with your own through the medium of words. A spark shot out of a true nature enkindled genial fires within. The fragrance of a sincere heart was shed upon your own. A keener eye than yours showed you what was hopeful through the gloom. An ear finer than yours interpreted the gracious words of a promise that made you glad. There was gathered in a capacious soul the dews of a benediction that, through loving lips, found way to your own. The words helped you, I say, strengthened, comforted, because they were in some sort a transmission of life. So it is that all the great sayings of the wise, the noble revelations of profound

affection, the utterances of saints and seers, charged with the experience of joy and sorrow, come to us with gifts of grace and power. He who moves us greatly is he who overflows with emotion. He who comes closest to us is he in whom we are conscious of profoundest recognitions and sympathies. There is no gratitude so deep as that born in the experience of a replenishment of the hidden life. All this, of course, suggests that words to be valuable must be expressions of truth of some kind that nourishes man, the immortal. There are shams of words,—the froth, the bubbles, the emptiness,—that give us nothing, save perchance deception and imposition. So there are sayings that are frigid, chilling, and dead, and sayings that strike weakness to the heart instead of strength, that unnerve and blind and prostrate by their malign power. Of course, there is a variety of capacity and susceptibility to receive the benediction or the curse ; but suspect that professed teacher of the deep things of life if you get no quickening from his speech, if he touches nothing in you that responds with an ache for the high and holy, and with joy in the hope of triumph. You have a right, if you are sincere in the struggle and aspiration for the good, to complain if no light breaks above you, and if you get no firmer hold on the royalties of God.

Now what gives the words of our Lord Christ their enduring, inexhaustible fulness and grace is, that they are disclosures of the heavenly verities. They are the good news of God. They compass the sense of the divine good-will to us. In them infinite love prophesies

to man, pleads with man, unfolds to him the glorious arcana of the everlasting kingdom. They are rays of the spiritual sun, whose glory fills the heaven of heavens, and can never wane. They are the music of the eternal harmonies of God's providence and care and sovereignty and unwasting grace. They are streams of the fountain in which life is cleansed, beatified, and satisfied for ever. Because they are of God, the will and life and love of Him who made us for Himself, they cannot die,—spiritual, they belong to spirit, and divine, they pertain to the eternities. The simple fact that Christ Himself is most significantly named as the WORD, shows the value and fulness of what He disclosed to the world. It is true that His life illustrated His doctrine. He was Emmanuel. He showed in the most glorious manner the Saviour coming into communion with human hearts, consoling human sorrows, conquering the dark evils in the paths of men, breathing His love and confidence and cheer evermore as He ministered, and dying at last for the salvation of the race. But suppose, with all His gracious charities and mighty works, His beautiful and perfect life and sacrificial death, He had proclaimed no divine message. Suppose He had told us nothing of the love of our Father in heaven, nothing of our holy human brotherhood, nothing of the object and possibilities of our being. Suppose He had brought no message that assures the weary heart of rest, and the sin-sick of health and joy ; that He had said nothing of the gifts of the Spirit, and nothing

of the many mansions of His glory ; that no word of a merciful providence had been spoken, no disclosure of the inner riches been made, no victory of the soul affirmed, no sweet counsel been given to the penitent, and no consolation to the sorrowful. Suppose, in a word, that His sermon on the mount, His parables, His conversations with His disciples, His warnings and invitations, had never been uttered and recorded, though He had Himself appeared, what precious, what incalculable treasures would be lost to us ! How destitute would the world be still of that light that is such a solace and a joy ! But, thank God, it is not for us to consider such a state of spiritual poverty, except to heighten our gratitude that our Lord's sayings are with us as true, as full, as rich, as inspiring, as when first pronounced. He could not be the Christ without these disclosures of the divine character and purpose and grace. He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly ; and He says, My words, they are spirit, they are life. And it is this very thing that makes them glorious, precious, enduring. They enlighten the soul, feed it, inspire it with blessed hope, lead it to God.

Strange as it may seem, there are some who try to discredit the wonderful disclosures of Christ as peculiar to Himself, who attribute to Buddha, Confucius, and Zoroaster, and other teachers of mankind, the light that beams from this Sun of righteousness. What advantage could be gained by such endeavor I fail to see.

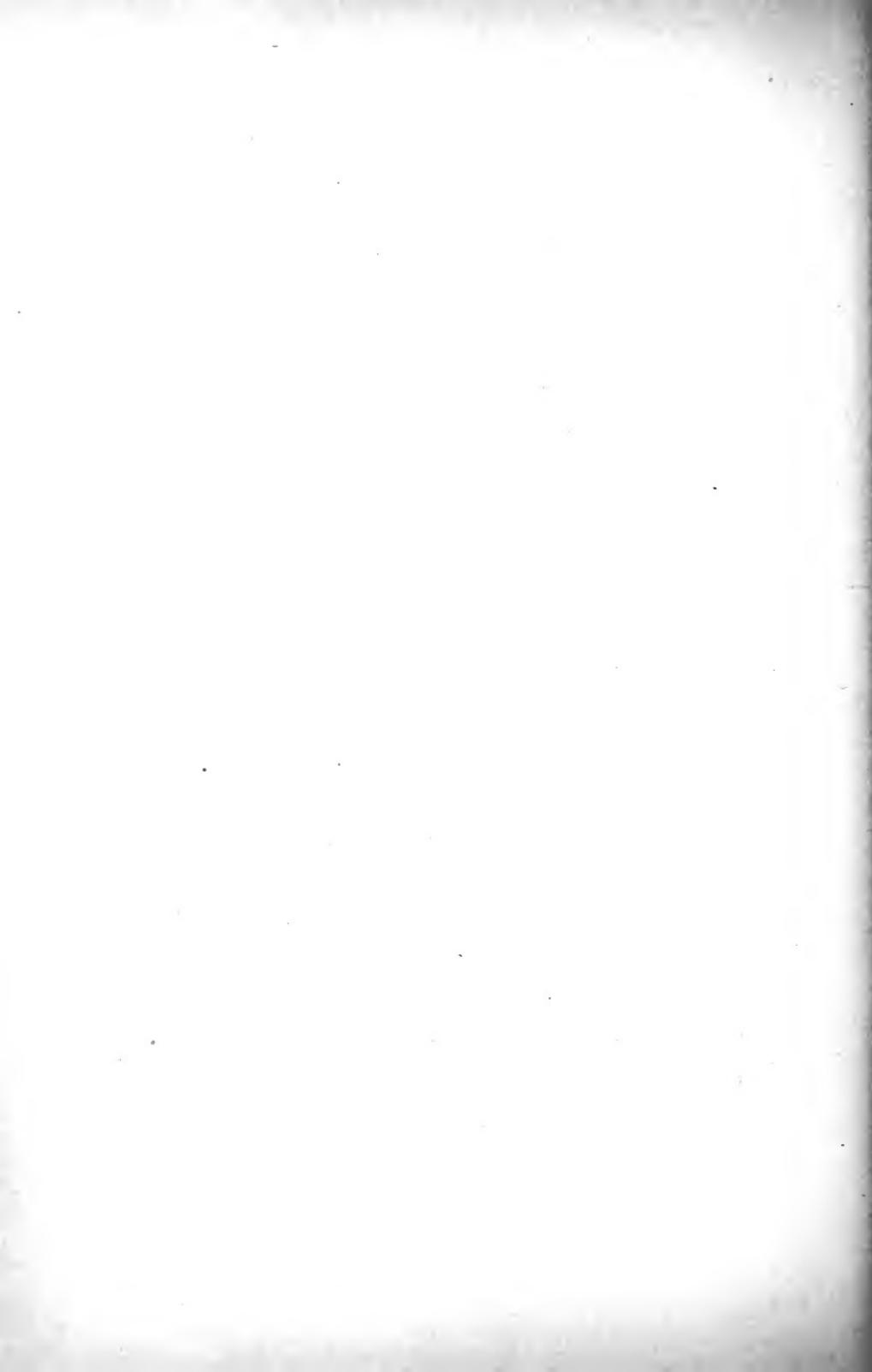
For, allowing that every true and wise and benign word has a divine source, and that all who communicated meanings of God to the soul had a sacred ministry, it is still the plainest fact of history that never man spake as spoke the Christ. None, from the nature of their calling and place, could speak like Him,—for He was the divine Logos, the living Word, the perfect Teacher, God with us. The scattered rays of spiritual light that had flickered and glimmered here and there in former dispensations poured forth from Him in a supreme effulgence. What was caught from ancient prophet and seer in mere glimpses, in Him had clear and ample unequivocal disclosure. He made known the will of God, so that all could see that it is good. He showed what was the end of being with unmistakable precision. He asserted the divine Fatherhood with a convincing authority. He held up the meanings of life in the radiance of God's love, so that hope and peace could spring in the dreariest bosom. The spurious things, the base things, frauds and shams and corruptions, had their disguises smitten off and their meanness and foulness made manifest by His terrible and majestic truthfulness. His words searched the hearts of men. They sifted souls. They brought the benediction of a love unfailing and everlasting in the heavens. They begot sweet confidences, and charmed holy hopes and affections, and interpreted the symbols of a benignant nature, and flushed the eternities with tender light. The way of escape out of sin's infirmity and bondage and death,

into the strength and freedom and life of God,—this was the message and the gift, and all help and sympathies that are connected with so complete a gospel. It is true that some did not choose to hear, did not seem to wish to understand. It is true that these words of life seemed spoken to some in vain. How far it was so we cannot know ; but with such variety of spiritual capacity, some, it must be confessed, of a very low range, it is not to be wondered at that some heeded not the heavenly teachings, and were deaf to the truths of life. It is not to be wondered at, I say, for you know there is barren soil, the rock on which the seed cannot root itself and grow. You have seen people rise and leave the assembly during the utterance of periods of rare and thrilling eloquence. You have seen people chatter and flirt while poetry was spoken that was sweet enough to stop an angel's flight, or while music was warbling that shook the very dews of celestial flowers into your soul. Some hear not, and believe not, for they are shut up in an insensibility that hinders perception and faith. It was so when our Lord first taught in His native land, and it is so still. Pride and conceit and selfishness and lust and sin stop the ears of the soul. But, however this may be, the sayings of Jesus keep their divine and imperishable fulness. Yea, as time passes on, as the experience of humanity becomes more peculiar and varied, as the range of human need and possibility seems more vast and sublime, these words of Christ seem to unfold grander, seem more charged with the

life divine. There are sayings which are helpful at the time, good and acceptable at the juncture when uttered, but which, under other circumstances and relations, have no powerful application. But the Lord's words take on, if possible, larger meanings with the centuries and the higher achievements of the race. Instead of wearing out, they ripen into more wonderful blossoms of wisdom and truth. The divine element in them fits them for every age, every clime, every race, every individual, every experience ; and, after epochs of change and convulsion, they come as fresh to the heart, as marvellous in their inspirations and disclosures, as when first spoken. And this miracle of their power in making God known to the creature, in shedding light on human ways and its mystery, of lifting the soul to the uses and the blessedness designed by infinite love, is the pledge of their immortality. You find them, dear friends, meeting your case as if only meant for you, bearing their balm and benediction to your hearts as generously as to those who have passed upward to their rest, sending on your hopes to everlasting habitations, and nerving your strength for a more arduous conflict with sin. This glorious gospel comes to you with the same cheer and consolation as it did to the disciples that gathered in upper chambers and in lonely places to hear its message from Paul and John and Polycarp and Ignatius. The weary and sin-sick find it as precious, the aspiring, as full of promise. Yes, it seems the larger becomes the spiritual capacity, the more wonderful shine its

meanings. Say what they may about the marvellous works of the Lord, men have to confess that His sayings seem grander and grander, and sweeter and richer, as the ages advance and the conditions of our humanity are more varied and peculiar. Time cannot wear them out. They are the abiding testimonies of the divine charity. They are the perennial streams of enlightenment and love. What is written on marble or brass is effaced at last, but that which is assimilated in the spiritual nature lives on, reproducing its loveliness and power. These sayings of Christ are lodged in souls that have found God in their possession. They fructify in lives that grow beautiful in the divine companionship. They speak in the hosannas of the glorified. They endure in the joys of hearts that ripen in celestial grace and knowledge. No decay can touch them, for, spiritual, they inhere in the spiritual kingdom. So, though the solid globe and its fair scenes fade and perish, though over realms now radiant and musical shall brood the silence of death, though the stars go out from the blue heavens and morning comes no more over the sweet valleys and the clear waters that embellish our globe, yea, though the majestic universe be resolved to chaos again, the blessed words of the Lord endure. But suppose you have not received them, loved them, lived by them, what, then, amid a dissolving world, a flaming firmament, while the vanities of time shrivel up and vanish? What, then? Unless you have His word, you have no life in you, no blessed, glad, heavenly life.

How, then, shall you survey the funeral of the globe, destitute of His word? What shall be your end? What your hope? Where your refuge? Ah, where your home? What, then, to the believer, to those in whom His word has wrought with power? What but His own approval, His own likeness, and His own everlasting joy.



AFTER TRINITY.

“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” — 2 CORINTHIANS iv. 18.

XVII.

THE TEMPORAL AND THE ETERNAL.

ANY one who takes notice of his higher experience knows that he has reference often to what does not belong strictly to the world of sense and time. He finds himself influenced more or less by what he does not see with the bodily vision, and what does not come within the domain of the material. He is so constituted, his nature is made up of such elements, that he inevitably has to do in thought and feeling with a world that is above the one that meets his common gaze. He looks at things that are not seen ; that is, he is convinced of realities that lie beyond the tangible ; he thinks of what is not disclosed to sense ; he acts with reference to verities that do not belong to physical existence ; he is drawn wonderfully sometimes toward a world which is only discovered by the soul. This is one of the great and significant facts of our strange being, this instinctive disposition to look outward and upward ; and I wish to use the fact as an evidence of the soul's creation for a divine and infinite existence. However large and glorious the visible universe may be, however varied its objects and aspects, or however much we may be aston-

ished and delighted and awed by its phenomena, we are never satisfied to limit our observation to it entirely. Thought is constantly going beyond the outward, the material, to something above, to something still unseen. The child who is just becoming conscious of thought does not rest in a view of what appears to sight. He looks at the sky, for instance, which, of course, seems a material concave. But his thought does not stop there: it goes beyond it. He thinks of the possibility of separating the veil, and of the regions that are farther on, and what might reward the traveller could he but fly away. The darkness to him does not merely conceal the objects that the light reveals ; but it is peopled with shapes new and strange, and different from those that he beholds with the natural eye. He looks into the waters, into the solemn woods, into the weird and many-colored clouds, and nowhere does his mind stop with the physical appearance. Something rises out of the watery depths, something flits away among the rocks and trees, something peers out from the edges of the fantastic clouds, something hides in the shadow of the great mountain, something wantons in the spray of the cataract, something whispers and sings and sighs in the evening wind and among the dark pines and along the melancholy shore,—something that is not the same as pertains to the familiar world about him. To say that all this is the child's fancy, which larger knowledge and experience dispel, does not impair in the least the significance of the experience, as illustrating the tendency of the soul. Knowledge and experience change one's

notions of the invisible world, but do not change the confession of the soul to its existence. The child, in his reachings forth for the bright pictures that he sees beyond the sky, or for the beings that seem to dance in the snow-flakes and talk in the autumn winds, is only exercising the nature that the man on a larger scale exercises in the hungerings of a heart that in peril and disaster would rest on the Infinite, and be satisfied.

What is true of the child, as he begins to look out on life and this wonderful world, is true of all nations in their infancy. They acknowledge a power outside the visible creation. They show by religious observance, by confessions of worship and scrupulous compliance with a ritual, that there is more that concerns them than what they see with their mortal eyes. This deference to signs and seasons, the sacrificing and the supplications, all the manifold puerilities of a narrow intelligence and gross ignorance, may betoken the most lamentable superstition ; but this does not destroy the fact of the tendency of the soul toward the invisible, the effort to get light beyond what is seen, the cry of the human for guidance and comfort and happiness and rest. The besotted savage that bows before a snake, or that beats the hollow drum to frighten away the spirits of the air, or who brings cakes and fruits to his idol, is connecting his service with a world beyond the visible as well as the philosophic sage who regards this great universe only as the thought of God expressed. Only the former sees but a little way with a dim and confused vision whose inferences are false and foolish.

All the religious rites and services of heathendom are the expression of this yearning of the heart for the infinite, the divine, the everlasting. It is not with the form of this expression that we have now to do, but with the state of being out of which the evidence is born, that is significant. The Christian invoking the heavenly Father, without a symbol to obstruct his spiritual vision, and the low African at his fetish worship, present vastly different objects, so far as the uses and ends of being are concerned ; but they both illustrate the fact that the soul is always overflowing the limits of the visible, that it is looking beyond itself and the material screen that surrounds it. It has to confess its needs and aspirations, whether its language be the gibberish of the bushman or the eloquence of Plato. What it uses to breathe its devotion, to tell its faith, to ensure its safety, to procure its happiness, is something that is shaped after the vision that it has of the awful, the unknown, the infinite, the beyond, when it looks with fear or wonder or hope or aspiration. The cannibal feasts of the Patagonians, the deathful procession of the Juggernaut, the contortions and agonies of the medicine-men of the Kiowas, the incense that is burned before Josh temples or in Roman sanctuaries, the sacrifices that the savage offers in the wilderness and the sacred fire that is kept aglow on Persian altars, the penances of the ascetic and the prayers of the saint, profoundly understood, — tell the same story of a soul that thinks of more than it can discover, that reaches beyond what shuts in its material vision, that acknowledges a power above the visible and

perishing. This is very different from saying that the methods used are equally advantageous to secure its end. They are not. But yet in all these ways the soul makes its confession ; it tells its story of want and weakness, and sin and sorrow, and cries for help and guidance and salvation.

And this is true whether one have any professed sympathy or relation with those who show unmistakably their religious beliefs and concern. It is a fact of experience ; and I do not hesitate to affirm that every life, however illiterate or cultivated, gives evidence of it. It is not merely the untaught peasant who betrays his feeling for a spiritual world, as in the gusty night, with an uncertain sky and a moaning wind, he hurries past the place of graves, where the white tombstones lean amid the rustling weeds and the moonlight falls fitfully on the dreary mounds ; nor the ignorant fisherman, who scuds with a shuddering awe along the shore where the pirate craft was wrecked, and where the legend tells of the souls that will not sleep after their deeds of avarice and blood. You and I have this sensibility to the awful fact of God. You may laugh at the absurdities of the superstitious, and even think from week to week that you have strength and wisdom to stand alone without a divine friendship ; but have you, too, not confessed, out of the far soundings of a soul that is God-given, that you looked at the unseen with eyes of astonishment and fear and thankfulness and desire. Is there no space of your life that is illumined by a light shining in from the

infinite, or vocal with voices that tell of your confidence in the unseen and everlasting? In your sincerest moments, whatever your usual frame of thought and life, you did not glory in your own resources, nor think that the visible and earthy was all that could meet your need. Perhaps you had wandered alone to some region remote from human dwellings, some mountain-top, where was spread beneath the vast panorama of a glorious landscape, and above, the clear depths of the cerulean sky; and, looking over the encircling scene, taking into your thought the valleys and the hills, the homes of the happy and the sorrowful, all the beauty in tint and tone, the grandeur and the glory coming down from the sky and throned in the majestic heights, you have seen beyond all. Your heart did not and could not rest in these glories of earth and heaven,—it went beyond them, farther on, and higher; and, as the solemn peace of the everlasting hills fell upon you, and the splendor of light and color shone into your heart, and the sense of the awfulness of life entered your soul, you seemed to gather an influence from beyond the glory around. You did not seem alone. You did not feel or believe that the visible was all, for something within you said “God,” and asked for a portion of the inheritance that stretched away fadeless and sweet beyond the limits of sense and time. Or you may have been on the great deep, drifting and drifting as into infinite fields, with no sight of succor or rescue, or been smitten there by a fierce cyclone that tore into spray the huge billows and flung the ship shud-

dering and convulsed into the hollow sea ; and while night settled around your barque with a terrific gloom, illumined only by the lurid lightning, and the great waves went overhead as if sweeping to certain doom the vessel and her treasures, and all faces gathered despair in the hour that you thought would be your last, then, in the might and majesty of the storm and the desolation of the scoured and shivering seas, you looked out on what was mightier, you had a feeling of the invisible, you fain would take hold of God, for you confessed that there was safety and help in Him alone. So, too, if you have stood where the earth shook and cracked under the tread of the earthquake, or where the air was thick with the ashes of the volcano ; or, if awakened from sleep by the cry of fire on the steamer, you have been swept on by the terror-stricken company to the vessel's side, not knowing whither to turn or what to do in the fearful extremity, then you have involuntarily thought of One who alone could save, who was above the earth and the fire and the storm.

But not merely in these great displays of power is the confession of the soul wrung out. It is made in every great crisis of life, when you have felt the deepest pangs of love and fear, or the deepest gratitude and bliss. When all your happiness seemed to hang on a single thread, just ready to break ; when the breath of one dearest of all was ebbing away, and you, too, seemed borne out upon the dark eternity afar; when, after anguish and agony, there flowed into your soul a sweet and ten-

der joy ; when strange terror came to you, or stranger rescue ; when after a surfeit of pleasure you loathed your sin with an inexpressible disgust, or when hurt by cruel tongues, and seized by the vice-like grip of wrong, — then you know how it was not with the visible that you held communion. You reached away for the good that is eternal in its infinite repose. Your heart ran out to One who holds the generations and ages in His hands. It was God that you acknowledged. It was God you wanted, that you praised, that you sought or feared or thirsted for, in your creature weakness and sin. I say God ; for there is no other name for what can satisfy you in your great sense of need or danger or gratitude or love. Whether you clearly recognized the divine attributes at the time of your greatest solicitude and at the sharpest crisis of your life or not, does not invalidate the meaning of your experience. You considered what was unseen. You yearned for the all-good. You inquired after the eternal refuge and the quenchless light. You wanted a solid foundation on which to stand, and a security that danger and wrong could not invade. It was a heart that was infinitely true and tender that you desired to take you to itself, and a justice sure and infallible and supreme that you asked for your vindication. The sight of your soul went further than man and his doings, or earth and its glories, or time and its decays. For you knew that man dies, and his power and pomp vanish ; and you knew that dead matter, though its forms seem imperishable, could not give you sympathy or aid

in the high and in the deep places of the soul. ' The invisible that you regarded was the reality of a divine one, of the Divine One, good and holy and almighty, from everlasting to everlasting. It was really God that you acknowledged, though you have not tried to honor Him ; God that you wanted, though you have not accepted His gracious gift ; God that you clung to for a moment, though you relapsed into indifference and unbelief. Whenever you have come close to the deepest realities of life, or groped hungry and thirsty in the awful mystery of existence, or asked out of aching and tears for a perfect rest and peace, you have confessed your want of God. But vague and dim has your sight been even when you felt most the awfulness of things, and pined most bitterly for peace. In the boundless immensity of the invisible, who could point out God, could lead you to Him, could give voice to His love, could give confidence and sure interpretations. Ah, you could feel the need of infinite succor, the desirableness of almighty sympathy, the beauty of a life cleansed and sweetened and saved ; but how come to the invisible One in whose hands all the heavens and the constellations are as the motes in the flooding sunshine. It is just here that come in the grace and glory and abundant fulness of the gospel. It is here that appear the fitness and meetness of the gracious provisions of redemption. In these last days God has spoken by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things ; who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His

person. He has declared the Father's will. He has illustrated the Father's love. He has made atonement for sin. He has brought life and immortality to light. What we most need to know of God He has revealed in His gracious teachings and mighty works, His cross and passion, His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. Jesus Christ has revealed the Father. In your sense of sin and sorrow, of perplexity and infirmity, of ignorance and spiritual want, you have not to look beyond time and sense to a vague infinity where there is no heart, no sympathy, no love, no supreme wisdom and almighty benignity,— where you are lost in an awful sense of your littleness and unworthiness and helplessness ; but you can see the divine tenderness and grace and power in Him who is touched with a feeling of your infirmities, who is to you elder brother, friend, redeemer, the bread from heaven, the water of life, the way to God,— yea, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

And will you not be constrained by such love as He displayed to come to Him and live His life? Is the cry of your own heart nothing? Is the gift of this Son of God nothing? Oh, you who believe know that it is every thing ; you know that if they take this Jesus away, you lose your path, you perish from hunger, the light goes out in the heavenly places, the awful immensity of the invisible is dark! You are a child crying in the night, with none to answer you and none to fold you in the arms of an everlasting peace. Oh, I beseech you

who desire peace and purity, who thirst for the water that refreshes the soul, who would know God and the fruitions of eternity, to accept this Jesus as your life and light, and through Him learn the secret of the heavenly kingdom,— the knowledge of the invisible God !

“The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” — LUKE vii. 34.

XVIII.

CHRIST'S REVERENCE FOR THE HUMAN SOUL.

IT is one of the most precious facts of the gospel that Christ's birth and career in time were in the natural order of our humanity. Infancy, with its appealing helplessness and winsome beauty, was His. Childhood, with its gleesome ways, its little wonderments, and innocent pleasures. Youth, with its eager curiosity, its vague aspirations, its glowing susceptibilities ; and then the laborious period of early manhood, at His dwelling in Nazareth. All His early experience, His home culture, His youthful inquisitiveness, His lonely converse with solemn and majestic nature, His toils and self-restraint in the midst of evil which He would fain assault, were the needed preliminaries to the mighty work of the world's redemption. Through all this space of growing sensibility, of deeper insight into life, of profounder consciousness of power, of patient waiting, of knowledge gained and self mastered, He was brought into the closest possible intimacy with the humanity that He came to save. No element of experience was wanting for the adequate fulfilment of His ministry when the hour came that He was summoned forth. And from His inauguration at His baptism to the night of His betrayal, it is

noticed how close was His contact with men, how little He withdrew Himself from their company save for purposes of devotion, and with what an inexpressible sympathy He seemed bound to each individual soul. Those who judged man from his externals, his social or official position, would greatly misinterpret the meaning of Christ's conduct and life. It was the sneer of the Pharisees that His presence among the depraved was the sign of His own unworthiness. Ah, had He been otherwise than He was in the infinite sympathy of a heart that appreciated all that was in man, we could not recognize the Saviour that we long for and love. "Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" say those who judge from the mere outward. My Lord and my God! exclaims the heart that beholds Him in His spirit overflowing with grace and love.

Two very significant facts strike us in the most cursory study of the history of Christ: one is His uninterrupted and constant devotion to man, irrespective of His character or condition; and the other, the wonderful way in which all sincere natures were drawn to Him. If we seek to give a name to the fact out of which this grew, it will be best stated in His reverence for the human soul. This involves no countenance to sin, no palliation of wrong-doing. It grows from an appreciation of all that is affecting and august in man's relationships, his original gifts, his possibilities, the sacredness of his personality as a child of God. In our haste or blindness we are apt to approve or disprove the whole man. We are

repelled or attracted by the person. We judge by some feature of character which we like or dislike. Christ saw with pure eyes the immortal part, the lineaments of the original creation, the glorious germ of angelic beauty and power. This human nature might be tainted, disordered, in ruins, still there was something left that told of a divine origin and glorious use, and beatific exaltation. Away back, if you please, in its remote depths, broken, discolored, trampled upon, concealed almost, were the remains of that nature imparted by the breath of God. Where there exists still a single sensibility that responds to kindness, where lingers a single affecting memory, where a gleam of something better than sin touches its desire and hope, there is something sacred. Christ saw and appreciated the essential soul. All that was human touched Him. He could not look upon that nature with its loves and hopes, its faded visions and its eager aspirations, its griefs and joys, its capacity for truth and holiness, without abiding interest and respect. Such an existence, so wonderfully gifted and peculiarly set in this strange universe, was not to be treated lightly. There was that in these troubled, desponding, anxious hearts, even if weak and sinful, of amazing significance and preciousness. He looked in reverence upon it. So in all His ministry, however affronted or beset He might be, you never see an act that shows disrespect for the soul. He goes into humble abodes as willingly as to the homes of the opulent. He treats the miserable leper as graciously as the courteous nobleman. He is as tender with the erring woman

as with His own mother. Peasant and pharisee, the poor publican and the upright Nicodemus, the beggar at the gate of Jericho and the beloved John, received the same generous recognition.

Our respect is too generally based upon the accidents of the individual life, and not its essentials. By many, how little comparatively is thought or seen of the soul that makes the life-drama possible,—the inner struggles, the love of the good that was not gained, the blight that smote heart and hope till the color faded out of life, the capacity still to love and trust, the longing for freedom and purity and peace,—how little in ordinary measurements of men is appreciated the influences that have chilled generous affection and blasted joys long in gathering, all the tenderness and desire hid in depths that are now congealed. Christ saw all ; and because the soul was the theatre of such solemn transactions, it had a fearful and tremendous interest. It might be allied to brilliant understandings or to narrow intellects, be incarnated in forms of wonderful beauty or of repulsive exterior, be set in obscure or lofty walks : it was still a human soul, a jewel of God, an existence born for sublime and heavenly destinies.

But Christ did not regard the soul, however affecting in its nature and experience, simply as it was in its low estate and disordered powers. He saw it in the light of its amazing possibilities, the glory of a perfected humanity. How often do we forget that man the sinner is the faded, blotched, corroded canvas of the splendid picture whose immortal colors shall glow intenser in the radi-

ance of eternity. Something unlovely, repulsive, base, we are quick to notice ; but of the majestic powers that may be evolved, the affections that may be purified and ripened by beatified companionships, his grand capacity for truth and beauty and joy, the glorious restoration possible in every attribute, till the whole man stands erect and symmetrical with everlasting joy upon his head, we think but little, as we contemplate the shattered, stained, suffering creature that is called man. But as the sculptor sees in the rough and weather-stained mass of marble the shape of beauty born in his creative thought, so did Christ behold in each soul the image of the glorious features of a humanity restored. That soul might now be poor and blind, crippled and sorrowful, its voices might be discords, it might grope in darkness and sin, but He saw it rich with affluent loves, clear-visioned amid the eternal light, its powers emancipated, its movement in the heavenly harmony, and its face lifted in the triumph of its great knowledge before the throne of God. Could He treat the creature within the limit of such a possibility with aught but tender regard ? Seeing humanity thus, could He despise any because of mental imperfections and moral poverty ? Could He spurn any, however sinful, or discourage any from the entertainment of a better hope, however bitter their experience and dark their way ?

This feeling of reverence in Christ explains His infinite tenderness and patience and trustfulness with man. So much was precious in the soul, so much that might be blighted and perverted by unkindness and neglect,

so much that needed counsel, sympathy, confidence, winning love, that He could not condemn harshly, could not refuse the mute appeal of suffering and temptation, could not dash out the little hope that flickered in the heart. So, in illustration, note how cordially He receives Zaccheus, who desired to see Him, how kindly He dismissed the woman after her accusers departed ashamed and confounded from the temple, with what gentleness He rebuked Peter with a glance as He passed the Court of Pilate, with what marvellous self-abnegations He ministered to the hungry and diseased crowds that followed Him, and with what tender assurances He responded to the penitent criminal that hung beside Him in the hour of His agony. Surely the bruised reed He would not break and the smoking flax He would not quench. What a commentary on our severity, hardness, unkindness. How prone we are to let one's errors or indiscretions hurry us to cruel judgments, and to hide the excellence of characters, which, in our passionate eyes, are blurred and stained.

Then, too, His patience,—reaching on and on in its long-suffering amplitude, waiting and never weary, hopeful and never despairing of conquering the soul,—no wonder the patience of Christ became an apostolic formulary of moral loveliness. What a power was in it! Here is a nature made suspicious by manifold deceits, stranded on the shoals of doubt and distrust, galled by unkindness, jaded by care,—unlovely, no doubt, desponding, obstinate, wedded to sin. Does the Master crush it by imperious authority, exasperate it by

taunts, fling it aside as a cumberer of the ground? Ah, give it time to recover, opportunities to know itself; nurse it by gentleness, gain its confidence, find the secret of its weakness and sorrow. Do not despair. It may bear fruit next year. Oh, this infinite patience of Jesus, how it rebukes our cynical criticisms and passionate haste, how it bids us take note of temperaments, troubles, habits, provocations, prejudices, in our judgments of men!

But Christ's reverence for the soul inspired a feeling of confidence in men, in their better selves, in their restoration from sin and error. It is one of the conceits of the worldly that they are deeply sagacious respecting the treatment of their fellows,—that it is unwise, weak, to put faith in man. The motto of the world is not "trust," but "suspicion." "Treat each man as a rogue," it says, "until he proves that he is not." To a fresh, unsophisticated nature there is no experience so keenly rasping as to find in its first dealings with men that its integrity and purity of intention are held in the gravest doubt, that its word is not believed. The effect of this is to produce suspicion. If you would make your children deceitful, convince them from their earliest years that you do not believe them. If you would cultivate dishonesty among those you employ, act as if, as a matter of course, you could not trust them. If you would aggravate any fault in those around you, treat them as criminals. A great deal that is reprehensible and demoralizing in society is the natural fruit of hard, cruel disbelief in man, of mean suspicions, of a

prying, captious, vindictive spirit, a habit of driving back whatever is responsive to a noble magnanimity in the heart, instead of evoking and strengthening it. Christ trusted men. The closeness with which He came to them begot confidence whose fruit was holy. He won by His faith in the nature that He gave Himself to save, by a sympathy that took hold of the deep, hidden tendrils of the soul, which thus could climb up to purity and peace, on the strength of His mighty heart. The triumphs of the cross are all in this spirit of divine persuasion. And here is our model. The wayward heart, the alienated affections, the evil life, cannot be reclaimed by reproaches, coldness, condemnation. Away down in the depths of the soul is a place that may be reached by sympathetic trust. Gain there an entrance, and you prepare the way for victory.

But our fault is that we allow the slights and offences of our fellows to warp our views of humanity, if not to paralyze our interest in man simply as man. I know that some have such an experience of wrong as to afford, perhaps, a partial excuse for their social isolation and suspicions. They have been foully treated, and the iron has entered into their souls. But too often men become morose, cynical, misanthropic, because they have found a few deceitful and unkind. But stand off from your fellows in disdain or mistrust, and they will stand off from you. Christ maintained this unconquerable respect for the soul in the midst of all burdens, rebuffs from Pharisaic pride, in poverty, temptation, loneliness, and pain. He never lost His patience

and tenderness and trustfulness, the outgrowths of His reverence for the soul. And this explains the reason of His power,—why men were so wonderfully drawn to Him, why the dejected in His presence could lay aside their burdens and the guilty see the hope of pardon, and life look fairer to the bereaved, and the horizon of the future widen and brighten to the hearts that ached and longed for rest. It was because He had in Himself a fulness that touched every soul, that souls found in Him strength and refreshment. Oh, amazing depth of divine humanity ! Fountain of inexhaustible life ! Here it is all plain. Christ is patient with you, very tender, and trustful of your better self. If you can only comprehend that Saviour coming so near to you, so compassionate, so sympathetic, seeing so clearly beyond all your foibles and follies, and in spite of your sins regarding your soul with such an interest ; if you could only see Him thus, and all with which this is connected ; His painful ministry, the agony of His passion, the stained and torturing cross, the infinite sacrifice and glorious resurrection,—you would feel springing up in your soul a yearning for Him, a sense of gratitude, a shame for your baser self, a desire of His likeness, a certainty of His love, so you could climb up from your spiritual penury and sin and darkness to His arms, and, resting there in holy trust and blessed peace, say, “ My Lord and my God.”

“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren.” — GENESIS xxxvii. 5.

XIX.

THE MIRACLE OF DREAMS.

WE speak of things as wonderful, after the manner they impress us ; so that which is a source of astonishment to one person, may produce no such emotion in another. Of course, in an absolute sense, one phenomenon of thought is as marvellous as another, for how we think at all is an inscrutable mystery. Still, in dreams, there is so much that apparently differs from the mental operations of our waking hours, that the experience is often more remarkable and impressive.

It is not my intention to deliver an essay merely on what is curious in the subject of dreaming. My object in what I shall say is to enhance our consciousness of the marvel of life, and its possibilities as illustrated by some of the wonderful phenomena of dreams ; and so it will be necessary to make some reference to their nature and peculiarities. What dreams are, all know by their own experience. It is generally believed, too, that by some a good deal of importance is attached to them. In the oldest books extant they are mentioned, and a supernatural origin generally ascribed to them. The Bible clearly shows this, as well as the poems of Homer. In the ancient Oriental courts of Babylon and Egypt it was customary for monarchs to have a class of

persons about them whose business it was to interpret dreams, and this was an important office of state. The classics abound in evidences of the wide-spread faith in their spiritual nature. Grave philosophers have written treatises on their interpretation, as they did on astrology. A common way of consulting the Greek and Roman oracles was for the inquirer to sleep a night in the temple, after the due performance of religious rites, when his questions were supposed to be answered in dreams. That dreams should have a peculiar significance attached to them by the ignorant and unlettered is not to be wondered at, when we consider some of their extraordinary phenomena, and the proneness of the mind to be affected by what is marvellous. They often come without any logical connection with what is remembered. They produce impressions frequently deeper than any written or spoken thought. They are sometimes characterized by a clearness of vision and a definiteness of aim that give them a peculiar emphasis and influence. Often, we know, they are a vague jumble of notions, or an incoherent series of images, or a terrible sense of the awful and hideous, or a ludicrous picture of improbable situations and circumstances, or a fantastic and vanishing display, in which we are alternately pleased and distressed. Then, again, they are signalized by the very highest operations of mind. For in dreams persons have found the clew to hidden paths of discovery, have solved the deepest problems, have composed admirable poems and music, have had what they accepted as providential warnings

and prophetic helps to the life before them. All who have any knowledge of the subject are aware that the bodily condition and the previous mental state have a great deal to do with these experiences. A full meal before sleeping, a peculiar train of thought during the day, unusual joy or sorrow, any extraordinary sensations, any strong excitement or solicitude, will be likely to shape and modify one's dreams. All of us have been the subject of states in sleep that surpass even the wildest imaginings of the day. We have seemed to struggle with the most terrible difficulties, to be plunged to the darkest abysses, and to be lifted to supreme heights of blessedness. We have swum through atmospheres of light and joy, have walked with the absent amid distant yet familiar scenes, have rejoined the loved in the everlasting meadows of heaven, have been in the midst of demons and of angels, have been conquered in awful conflicts, and have come off victors ourselves ; have died, have risen to peace, and have had life set to all possible activities and employments,—indeed, there is nothing too fantastic or improbable in the range of our lives that we have not experienced or had glimpses of in dreams.

A pertinent question is before us, and it is this : Are dreams of any more supernatural origin than the ordinary processes of the mind ? Does any thing more divine pertain to them than to our normal daily thought ? In replying, I wish to affirm, first of all, that the inspiration of every good thought and right feeling is due to the Infinite Spirit that is the life of all. I hold that

evermore the gracious Light is streaming on us from above, that the gracious Voice is ever speaking to us, that the heart of Love is touching us with its tender and holy pulsations. But we are largely unprepared or unwilling to see, to hear, to receive the influxes of refreshing and purifying life. We cannot trace out the occult methods by which any wise and ennobling idea comes to us, or how any sweet and blessed impulse moves us. The process of all this is hidden. We simply know the facts of experience, or the order of sequence, which we call the laws of our being. But the miracle of the generation of the thought we cannot explain. Now, as the operations of the mind go on, to a great extent at least, while we are in a state of sleep, the good influences imparted in the process cannot of course be eliminated by the mere fact of the senses. Ordinarily our condition is such, in sleep, that we fail to remember our thoughts, or the impression is confused, and all the experience of the mind quite vague and indefinite. But again it is not so. There are attitudes of the soul in sleep where the good thought may be more powerful, and hence more inspiring and helpful, than when awake. For at such a time the mind may be so free from pre-occupation, so wonderfully unembarrassed by diverting influences, that its receptiveness shall be greatest, that it shall be best prepared to see clearest and to yield to the gracious persuasion. The very influences that in waking hours might have hindered the blessed impression or the inspired thought may then be inoperative, so that what is peculiarly enlightening or gracious may

reach and move it. You observe that I do not attribute this superior influence, whenever it may be experienced, to the mere article or fact of sleep, but to the favorable conditions for it. Whatever that is most wonderful in the impulses or apprehensions of the dreamer that have led to practical consequences, would have been realized when awake, if the soul and the surrounding world had been in just the same accord, if the individual's receptiveness had been the same. If there ever comes, then, in dreams a glimpse of what is higher than we are in our usual frame, a knowledge of what is deeper and more concealed, any light or help that is not vouchsafed while the senses are all awake, it is simply because there is just then a finer susceptibility, a more appropriate state, a more suitable medium, for such impressions and illumination. God is always coming to us in the various methods of His disclosures, speaking, instructing, guiding, helping on to a more excellent realization ; but we are a great deal of the time too indifferent or too stupid or too obstinate or too rebellious to receive and obey and understand. A little, of course, we gain and use for the higher life ; but how thick the veil seems to the most of us between the visible and the invisible, how dull we are to influences that come to us from the Infinite. The prophets of old heard the voice of God and saw His glory, because their natures were largely open to His light.

My chief reason for calling your attention to the wonder of dreams is in the very remarkable and powerful illustration they give of the possibilities of our being

under conditions that may be deemed reasonable in some future state. The dream, while it continues, is unquestionably a real experience. If one should continue to dream, the state, to all intents, would be as actual as any other. Now we know that the consciousness to which we give the name of dream is occasioned and modified largely by the peculiarity of the sleeper's sensations at the time. Dr. Gregory relates that, having occasion to apply a bottle of hot water to his feet at bedtime, he dreamed that he was treading the hot soil of Mount Etna ; and when Dr. Reid once applied a blister to his head, he dreamed that he was scalped by Indians. These illustrations might be indefinitely extended, but almost every one can corroborate the fact affirmed by reference to some marked experience of his own, of a similar kind. By affecting, therefore, the organs of sense, or any of the vitalities of our being, so that the mind is reached, there may be produced impressions in sleep of the most significant character. Now it is with joy and suffering that we are most concerned, and which in some way comprise what is most important to us in life. But dreams show a wonderful scope, a prodigious capacity of our nature for such experiences. There have been opened to the sleeper elysiums of transcendent happiness. He has floated in atmospheres of joy. He has been touched by harmonies more exquisite, been thrilled with utterances more sublime, been tranced in ecstasies more supernal, been dazzled with glories more sweet and ravishing, than any that ever signalized his waking state. In fact, he has

been more profoundly convinced of the possibility of a rarer and deeper enjoyment than any yet realized by some wonderful dream, than by any other influence. He may not be able to define the quality of the good that he had a glimpse of in sleep, nor give a name to the disclosure, nor impart to a listener the consciousness that he had of the life of love, but the glorious impression was strongly made. It told what was possible within the limits of our existence under other and suitable conditions. And so with the opposite impression of suffering. Who has not at some time, while in slumber, had an indescribable sense of horror most intolerable and overwhelming,—something that has no apparent analogy to any ordinary pain or dread, but is of a kind by itself in its suggestions of supernatural agony. De Quincey describes some of his hallucinations under the influence of opium, and among other things says: "I fled from the wrath of Brahma through all the forests of Asia. Vishnu hated me, Siva lay in wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris. I had done a deed, they said, at which the ibis and the crocodile trembled. I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed by cancerous kisses by crocodiles, and lay confounded with unutterable slimy things among reeds and Nilotic mud." Sometimes the sufferer is clearly conscious of the scenery, personages, and events, through whose terrible panorama comes his sense of woe,—every thing is sharply defined in the vision of the soul. But, again,

he is the subject of mere sensations of dread that pierce even to the marrow of his bones ; great, black, undefined, gigantic loads of misery seem pressing him down ; strange, subtle, brutal, demoniac influences seem to have him in their control ; he is stifled by a breath more leprous and infernal than any conception that he imagines of disgust. The very horror of the experience rouses him, and he is never so thankful as when he knows it is all a dream. And yet there is most solemn meaning in all this, whether it be of pain or pleasure to the sleeper, who perchance soon forgets the impression that for a while was so powerful and thrilling. We are forced to allow, by considerations like these, that our capacity for enjoyment or suffering is tremendous, and far beyond any thing that may be inferred from the usual phenomena of our experience. We see that there are possibilities that we have not yet fathomed in our actual being, but which may be as natural as any of the ordinary operations of our lives. Now while we remember, as we have seen, that the phenomena of dreams are modified by whatever affects the senses or touches the springs of feeling and thought, we can easily conceive of a state of being where just those influences most powerful to excite joy or suffering may prevail. There is no more reason to reject such a view than to reject the ordinary facts that are observed in common human life. In the future world, if the conditions of the soul are suitable, it will be just as natural for its happiness to rise to an indescribable fulness as it is for the flower to blossom or the water to run. And the

same may be said of the experience of suffering. That nameless horror which agonized your sleep may have its actual counterpart in the soul of the wicked, that has madly flung away and trampled upon its talent for God and His righteousness.

But this view of what the human soul has capacity for, as indicated by dreams, has powerful emphasis in another phenomenon of their appearance. I refer to the astonishing rapidity of the operation of the mind during certain states of slumber,—a rapidity which would seem incredible were it not attested by the most indisputable evidence. De Quincey declares that he sometimes seemed to live seventy or one hundred years in a single night. “A person who was suddenly aroused from sleep by a few drops of water sprinkled in his face dreamed of the events of an entire life, in which happiness and sorrow were mingled, and which terminated finally in an altercation upon the border of a lake, into which his exasperated companion, after a considerable struggle, succeeded in plunging him.” The whole dream could have lasted but a few seconds. Dr. Abercrombie tells of a case, which is often quoted, of a man who dreamed that he had enlisted as a soldier, joined his regiment, was apprehended, carried back, tried, condemned to be shot, and at last was led out to execution. After the usual preparations a gun was fired, and he awoke with the report to find out that the cause of his disturbance was a noise in an adjoining room. In a brief space, less than it takes to describe it, this long series of events had passed through the mind. Writers

on mental phenomena give many interesting instances of the same kind. A similiar activity of the mind is noticed in the case of some while falling from high altitudes, or while passing through all the sensations of drowning. This amazing swiftness of the mental operations, therefore, under suitable influences, suggests experiences of the soul in another state of being, of the most impressive character. As we think of its career, with all its faculties unembarrassed, acting with their fullest capacity, where all is favorable for their most perfect movement, we are awed at the contemplation. For what volumes of strange and rich experience may it gather into itself in brief periods! What depths of knowledge may it penetrate at a glance! What areas of royal ownership, illimitable and splendid, may it sweep over in the realization of its immortality! With what a tenacity may it hold the wonders of the heavenly universe as they unroll! How the living links of its memory may be brightened and welded, until every sweet of its long past shall pour out its nectar, and every blossom of beauty that has adorned it shall shed again and again its exquisite fragrance! Considering the celerity of its thought, the power of its apprehension, the sagacity of its endeavor, the spontaneity of its loyalty to its light and privilege, with its life and movement in God, the imagination flags at a sight of its possession, and joys in eternity. But the same fact which suggests such probabilities of blessedness also warns us of the possibilities of woe. If the pure soul may have a fruition so wonderful in the career of its

glorification, the godless one may have a corresponding intensity of misery. For we have only to think of the foul and perverted nature, with its faculties preternaturally alive, with all its swiftness and power of perception and memory, beholding its loss and shame and discords, its departure from divine order, its rejection of love and truth and Christ, to have a picture of wretchedness from which we may turn away appalled. And yet reason and the nature of things demonstrate that a horror is possible in the rage and madness and corruption of the wicked, equal to the actualization of that which is hinted to us in the terror and mystery of dreams.

I might illustrate the topic still further in this direction by reference to the extraordinary imagination and logical power of the mind sometimes manifested in dreams, and a kind of prophetic sight that has at times momentarily characterized it. Condorcet, for instance, found in sleep the steps of a difficult calculation that he could not achieve during the day. I have heard persons relate similar facts. The wife of Julius Cæsar, the night before his assassination, dreamed that he fell bleeding across her knees. Almost every one's memory serves him here. My only sister, living in Maine, dreamed of my mother's fatal sickness and its peculiarities, when it came upon her last fall, and wrote a letter about it to express her solicitude, before she heard a word of the news that summoned us to the chamber of death. The use I make of such facts is to show again the possible achievements of the soul, its power of com-

municating at a distance without the usual medium, its marvellous insight, the scope and capacity of its understanding, when a sufficient degree of perfection has been attained. But I have said enough to impress the main idea of my discourse. We are to live with eternity in view.

No thoughtful or serious person can regard any phase of life without a sense of the awfulness of its consequences, and something instructive and deeply suggestive we are taught by the wonder of dreams. The law of our being continues, whatever we ignore or notice, whether we attach a meaning to one particular manifestation of it or to another. We may never fully know ourselves. Yet were sin entirely absent from us, were body and soul both in absolute health, then would the operations and direction of life be right and its functions be supremely blessed. It is in the right use of our being, in the harmony and methods of God, that our glorification is secured. And into this harmony, where thought and impulse and action are in accord with the infinite wisdom and love, God is ever seeking to draw us. The gospel is a just and sublime attestation of His gracious will. Christ exemplifies for all mankind and for all ages the way and the truth and the life. And if we would discover the graciousness of our heavenly Father, the great meanings of life, whatever can enlighten and inspire us so that we secure a sure salvation, it must be in the discipline of His discipleship and in the grace that makes us like Him. We cannot plead our own ignorance, or the Divine indifference and neg-

lect. All things that insure the supreme ends of life are ours, if we will but use our talent for good, and do His will. The results of our obedience or disobedience are inevitable. Whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. And he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

“And the bow shall be in the cloud: and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” — GENESIS ix. 16.

XX.

THE CONSTANCY OF THE DIVINE ORDER IN NATURE.

THE book of Genesis gives a brief sketch of the divine order of things in the history of creation, and of man in his earlier condition and experience, which, though imperfect as an exhaustive and scientific statement, is still a broad and solid groundwork of fact, and, properly interpreted, is consistent with the profoundest research and the most critical philosophy. What appears unmistakably is the gracious expression of the infinite Deity in the production of the universe and its inhabitants for a beneficent purpose,—the fact that underneath all the phenomena which we call nature is the power and wisdom and goodness of God, and that the creature, man, is precious in His sight. What I desire to present to your attention is the stability of the divine order in creation, the permanence of the divine methods and government, which are all tokens of the infinite benignity of the Highest. Because it is declared that God set His bow in the cloud in token of a gracious covenant that there should be no more such universal destruction as that which had come upon the earth in the deluge, it is not to be inferred that before this time no rainbow had ever ap-

peared. If the sunshine had fallen on the raindrops previous to the date of the event recorded, just the same beautiful phenomenon had been witnessed, for like causes produce like results. What was emphasized by calling attention to its natural appearance was the faithfulness of God in the economy of His works. He would assure the mind of Noah and of his descendants that the gracious processes of nature should go on. He declared a covenant to the effect that no more such floods should inundate the earth ; and no sign of His veracity and goodness could be more appropriate for a token than this beautiful child of the sun and shower. God says to Noah, "I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." There is something very touching and assuring in this language, for it bids us think that in the very production of what is so lovely to the eye, in the very doing of the thing which creates the admirable object, God says, "I am mindful of my promise ; the very operation of my laws is the evidence of my tender and everlasting regard." Two different tendencies have been manifested by mankind respecting the wonderful operations of what is denominated nature, both of which are fatal to right views of the Supreme Goodness, and hence to our highest welfare. The tendency of primitive man, unenlightened in mind and heart, was to attribute all the darker aspects of nature—storm and flood, and earthquake and whirlwind—to a vengeful deity, or to deities who delighted to wreak their passions

in fickle and capricious outbursts of violence upon mankind. We know from historic records how largely this belief obtained among the heathen, and how terribly furious these unseen powers seemed to them. With such notions of the government of the elements and the world ; feeling exposed to the pitiless rage of wind and lightning, and deluge and fire and ice,—in their dread and fear they sought to propitiate the awful gods, and deemed nothing too precious to sacrifice, if they might avert their terrible displeasure. It is easy to see that if such a dark superstition should become universal, how discouraging it would be to all enterprise, how chilling and blighting to all cheerful views of life, how destructive of that effort which needs constancy and order in the divine operation for its basis, how, in a word, it would react with fatal power upon the character of man, making him capricious and cruel and bloodthirsty and revengeful, like the deities he feared and would conciliate. There is hardly a crime or an abomination that would not finally spring out of such foolish and dreadful notions of the phenomena of nature.

The other tendency, likewise injurious and mistaken, is to remove God altogether from His universe, to attribute simply to what are called laws the whole wonderful economy of the visible creation, as if these alone were sufficient for the perpetuity of the gracious order essential to the high ends of being. This tendency is greatly formed by the influence of one-sided scientific studies, or what results from a contemplation merely of

one aspect of science. It is nothing which true science promotes, or for which it should be held responsible ; for science, properly studied, is suited in the most impressive way to open one's mind and heart to the most affecting disclosure of a present God. The disposition of many people, however, who acknowledge the existence of the Almighty is to think of Him as remote from His works, especially when the ordinary course of things goes on in nature. But when some sudden and terrible phenomenon appears, some great convulsion, some catastrophe that is destructive, then you note that the same minds that were quite unimpressed by the tranquil and regular process of things are quick to attribute the dreadful reality to the Almighty. For instance, the tornado careers over the earth, sweeping forests and villages before it, and tossing man and beast as autumn leaves in its path ; the ocean is heaved up so that the tidal wave engulfs cities with their inhabitants ; lands are deluged by rivers that tear away their embankments ; the earth is parched by long and fierce drought ; the thunder-bolt smites with its lance of fire ; the earthquake swallows the monuments of industry, and the lava-flow engulfs great towns in its burning sea, — and the cry is, “Lo ! the visitation of God.” People pray for mercy, and it seems to them that the Almighty is near and terrible. But is He any nearer than in the soft sunshine and the vernal dews ? Does He put forth His hand any more unmistakably than when He tints the flower or swells the pulp of the grain ? Is His speech any more emphatic or significant than in

the lapsing waters, and musical zephyrs, and the blue skies, and the murmurs of the fragrant groves? There is a strange unmindfulness of His presence and His power in what is ordinary and without startling phenomena in His works, as if He were not acting and speaking, unless by some astonishing token that brings terror and death. And a great many pious people come to think that it is chiefly in spiritual things that He is concerned,—that it is almost a sin to recognize His love and goodness in the daily and regular operations of the visible creation. They seem to feel that it is a slight upon His grace to acknowledge that His goodness is expressed in all the common and ordinary things of life and nature. Of course the highest of all interests are the interests of the soul; but the soul is educated, enlightened, and set forward graciously, in every way that God is allowed to deal with it. That is not wisdom nor genuine spirituality that ignores or depreciates any of the instruments of His love, or that slights any tokens of His presence, or the provisions of His mercy. The mind that is most open to the evidences of His glory, and which carries with it a consciousness of His loving-kindness and benign purposes, will be most likely to be devout and obedient. As I have stated, I wish you to think of the stability of the divine order and processes in the world; and if we regard the character and nature of the Almighty as we ought, we shall feel that gracious assurance which will stimulate both our devotion and our industry, and hence be most productive of our good here and here-

after. God Himself declares that He is the unchangeable One ; and because He is God, the universe that He has made is ordered in righteousness, and has the elements of constancy and permanence. The whole economy of things is most wise and good, and their phenomena can vary only in accordance with the principles which belong to the material of the universe. He has constituted the elements as they are, the ingredients of things of every kind, and under like operations like results will be obtained. Certain properties exist in the soil, the water, the air, the vegetable and animal kingdoms. The effects of these, under the same circumstances, do not change. The germ always sprouts, if the conditions are favorable ; and the fruit ripens, the rain falls, the frost comes, the ice melts, food nourishes, and life expresses itself. There is no failure of any thing after the same process, if the method is exactly the same. The same air, the same water, the same soil, the same food, always produce the same results, unless there is some different interference. There is exactly the same constituents in the particular mineral, plant, and animal respectively, and under like treatment the effect is the same. Gravitation, electricity, magnetism, chemical property and change, maintain their constancy of operation. It is so all through nature. So there is nothing that can be attributed to freak, to caprice, to chance, to any absolute disorder. All the changes, the perturbations, the discords, the confusions, the conflicts, that appear in nature, go on according to as certain a plan and as true an order as

what we call the most perfect harmonies. There is just as perfect a regularity in the tornado, in the water-spout, the deluge, the thunder-storm, the earthquake, as in the vicissitudes of day and night, the flowing of the brook, the dew-fall, the expansion of the leaf, the growth of the child, the shining of the stars. What seem discords and convulsions in nature are the regular action of forces which are just as legitimate as the fertilizing power of the soil, or the frost in winter. Our infirmity of right apprehension consists in the fact that we are unable to trace these forces, as we can some others, and so we are often surprised and confounded by unexpected displays and awful phenomena. If we could see the influences which were gathering in the earth all through their processes, we could calculate the earthquake as certainly as we can the ripening of the summer grain. If we had known, for instance, the exact state of the groundwork of the reservoir, and the action of the water upon it, we could have predicted the inundation that swept down the valley of Mill River, to a day and an hour. The same is true respecting the coming of the whirlwind, the tumbling down of avalanches and precipices, the liberation of malaria from the marshes, the descending thunder-bolt, the drought that blisters the earth till there is famine and death. The regular order goes on. The elements of matter perform their legitimate functions, but we are ignorant of a great deal that is preliminary to the disclosure, and the conditions that ensure the result. It seems to be one of the providential ordinations that man, with his

gifts of intelligence and reason, shall learn to avail himself of the constituents and uses and order of things, and so make them contribute to his advantage. But he finds that the same force or element may be harmful or beneficial. The water which drowns and devastates, quenches his thirst. The lightning that smites to death, carries his messages of love around the globe. The fruits whose juices intoxicate to fiendish madness, nourish and comfort him. He can make the fire his faithful servant or his terrible scourge. Out of the same plant he can extract medicine or poison. He can convert the same mineral into an instrument of life or death. But in all this contrariety of uses there is no antagonism in the processes of what he calls nature,—no collusions or caprices or contradictions. The result follows the cause with as certain effect as the rainbow on the cloud when the sunshine gleams in the drops of the shower. The divine order of things goes on. It is for man to employ for a noble purpose the gracious arrangements of the universe. And the fact of the regularity and stability of the economy of nature ought to be a solace and an inspiration to him. If he should feel that the world is governed by chance, that even in the least things there is disorder and capriciousness, there could be no such strong confidence as is essential for earnest effort and productive industry. But knowing that the operations of nature are constant; that the government of the universe, from the infinitesimal atom to the measureless worlds, is divine, and on principles that admit of no freakish fluctuations; that nowhere and

at no time the infinite and all-wise and all-gracious God is absent, so that any possible chance can operate,—one can have the very highest incentives to labor in the line of the good and useful, which are secured by employing the methods as ordained. But because of the inevitable sequence of causes in nature, man is not to think that there is nothing for him to do to make nature serve him, in new ways and with a manifold munificence. The crude material is given him, the great and marvellous forces of all her kingdoms are afforded: but he has to learn how to employ them, how to secure the service that is most beneficial. And he is constantly doing this; still he would not, were he not convinced that these gracious operations would go on. Without this confidence he would not sow his fields, nor build his home, nor venture upon the seas, nor adapt any mechanical contrivance to a special work. He advances in possession and power as he gets at the secret of the processes of nature, which, when learned, never cheat him. Already he has made the waters do his bidding, in bearing his freights and in driving his machinery. He has compelled steam to execute gigantic labors in a thousand fields of industry. He has summoned the lightning to be his messenger, so that on the speed of thought he speaks to the ends of the earth. He takes the light from the stars, and in its colors tells the substances of distant worlds. The time will come when he will sail through the air with the swiftness of the wind, when he will call down the rain at his bidding, direct storms to different quarters of the land, and con-

vert a great deal that is now, through his ignorance, harmful or destructive to friendly agencies and helps to his enjoyment. In saying this, I do not presume upon the divine prerogative any more than by claiming the propriety of reclaiming wild and unproductive nature to profitable cultivation. No one thinks now that it is any trespass upon the province of the infinite Creator to secure by cultivation the most admirable flowers, the choicest grain, the most delicious fruits ; to make the sun paint pictures, to make deserts blossom by irrigation, to mend speech and sight by surgical art, to predict the coming storms by the observations made in a hundred posts over a vast territory by scientific tests. And so it will be only employing the very methods of nature to make other achievements of a useful character, when the means to do so are sufficiently understood. In all these modifications of the natural processes, in all the beneficent uses to which nature is subjected, in all that the intelligent will and power of man cause her to perform, he is making no essential change in the constitution of things ; he is neither contriving nor enacting any new law, he is importing no new force whatever into the grand creation. He is only using nature in a way analogous to the use of himself. The savage only partially uses himself so far as the highest service is concerned. For how many of his powers are locked up ! How narrow his capacity of insight ! How meagre his knowledge ! How poor the resources of the mind in the higher spheres of thought and endeavor ! But the cultivated scholar commands

the learning of the ages. He gives instruction in all science. He builds cities, constitutes governments, equips and directs armies, controls the forces of steam and electricity, converts the wilderness into a garden, and of the ore and tree builds implements that bring all the wonders and treasures of foreign climes to his door. But he only works in the line of his creation, his aptitude. So in our management of nature we are only bringing out the realities that are latent there, are only putting to service what is given and ordered of God. No man need think that the end is reached yet in the control that man will have of the marvellous constituents and forces of the universe. He has as wonderful triumphs to make in the future as have signalized the past. No one can put the exact limit to his achievement. But whatever he gain of good can only be in the line of nature itself, can only be in accordance with the essential principles and laws which are of God. In this direction his gains will be good, because God is good ; for His whole creation bears the stamp of His benignity. And, as I have said, the inspiration to this effort, and to all effort, is in the sincere belief in the constancy of the divine order in creation,—the sure confidence that certain causes must produce certain definite results. The Bible does not hesitate to speak of God as creating, as disclosing Himself in His works, as guiding man in the knowledge and use of the world in which he is placed, and as the present Lord who will not give His glory to another. And one very important thing is gained if we acquire a

state of mind that recognizes a present God, that is permeated through and through with such a conviction of the Infinite One as shall assure a calm trust in His unchangeableness, His infinite wisdom and love, and that shall inspire an effort of life in harmony with His laws and in accordance with His will. If we can only feel profoundly the fact of God near, and in all, and over all, we shall be moved, in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, to live as becomes sons and daughters of our Father ; we shall seek to find out all we can that may make the world we live in of higher use to us ; we shall strive to conform ourselves, our lives, more and more to the perfect methods of God ; we shall take the promise of God to Noah as to ourselves ; and in every fair thing we see in earth or sky, in the bud and dew, in sunshine or shower, in the changing seasons and in all the marvellous growth and changes around us, we shall hear the promise of the divine fidelity, the stability of the universe declared. Then we shall not merely think of the Almighty in the awful phenomena that alarm, but in all the courses of the world. We shall be taught to make useful the forces that, in our ignorance, hurt and destroy. We shall see that love is everywhere working, everywhere speaking, everywhere helping, and that it is for us to be dutiful and obedient, and so industrious and virtuous and holy. And looking for the perfect example, and for the light that shall guide us, and for the Saviour who has made expiation for our sins, we shall see Jesus, with His face shining with the brightness of the Father's glory, and we shall take His

hand and follow His steps, and find in the love of His deep, true heart a joy and an inspiration that shall enable us to do the works that are given us to perform. We shall find in His sympathy a companionship, and the grace of His atonement a deeper knowledge than Noah could attain ; and it will be our meat and drink then to do the will of Him who made all things, and by whose pleasure they are and were created.

*“The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them
that have pleasure therein.” — PSALMS CXI. 2.*

XXI.

AN AUTUMN WALK.

IT is autumn time again, with the mists and the shimmering sunlight, the crispy air of the mornings and the dreamy haze of afternoons, the colored foliage, the peculiar forest odors, the inarticulate repining sounds coming you know not whence from the pensive landscape, the pathos of flowers withering and leaves falling, the russet stubbles, and the briefer days that you have known so often before, the same time of brilliant change and fading glory that the year always brings, whether we wake or sleep. You have come out of the city, we will suppose, for a little while to the familiar scenery where the hills are piled upward with their rainbow splendor, and the meadows sleep behind the brown ridges, and the orchards drop their fruit on the sunny slopes. You recognize the fields where you once wandered and perhaps toiled, the lakelet and streams, the groves, the mountain-paths, the secluded nooks, and the quiet dwellings amid the farms, the pictures of which time does not efface during the longest absence. You are thankful for a day of rest, a day of random wandering and of reverie. Here, at least, you can be true to self. None shall rally you on an unmanly sensibility, even if the tears start to your eyes. The tension of

artificial life is here removed. You are free with Nature in her sincerest moods.

Almost instinctively you have come to the old home-stead,—perhaps the abode of strangers now,—and in a sort of abstracted air you follow the narrow foot-paths where once trudged your little feet to the garden where you first noticed the miracle of growth, to the spreading fruit-tree beyond, to the clustering vines against the wall, and to the edge of the pasture where the golden rod and purple asters stand bright in the sun. Absently you pick up an apple beneath the bough that used to drop them for you, and stand looking as one who dreams. The hills do not seem so far off now as they did once, nor is there such wonderment in the fantastic clouds and the blue spaces of sky between the trees. There was the swing in the great oak, and the playhouse on that bank ; and there you caught the big butterflies as they hovered over the sweet clover, and saw the swallow sail and circle and vanish into the silent heavens. And dear faces float before you again. That mother, if you could see her, would she look now, as when tired and fretful you nestled to her arms ? The call, the smile, the kiss, the tender chiding, those stories that you loved to hear repeated from her lips, you remember it all. And that father, how strong and good he seemed, as clinging to his hand you went a little way into the fields and were lifted over the hedges and walls, and came back with a bunch of spring violets in your hands and the delight of a new experience in your heart. Ah, the pictures of infancy, how they cluster

here! The house, the shrubbery, the trees, the roadside, the sky, gleam with them. And the voices, the faces, the cheer, the morning and evening benediction! The household group will never get together again on earth. The baby is now a woman grown; and one, maybe, is over the sea; and one is never mentioned perchance, though he is never forgotten; and one lies under the daisies. Is God as near to you now as when you lingered in the old home?

But quietly you have sauntered on by the bordering thickets of the country lane, where the robins used to sing before you, and the ground-squirrel stop and chatter, and where you gathered nuts from the hazel bushes and the jagged hickories, till the little school-house is plain in view. It is not in your heart to turn away. You cross the play-ground, you linger around the well-remembered nooks, you mark the signs of youthful activity and caprice,—noting change, of course, perhaps improvement; but something here touches you deeper than any reminiscences of the academy or the university. Through the uncurtained windows you see the children as of old,—the fresh faces and the roguish eyes, quaint little bodies, in queer garments, the meek-looking and the mischievous. There, too, is the familiar buzz of the educational hive. But your playmates! There they sat, there they gambolled, and at first life's ripple and then its great wave swept them out. Little do you know of most of them now. But that glossy-haired girl, so like an unsullied flower, fell asleep long ago; and the noble-browed boy who sat beside you lies

with a bullet in his heart in a Southern grave ; and the incorrigible truant of the woods is a noted naturalist ; and the rough youngster is immersed deep in stocks and trade ; and another, whose life opened so fairly, is deserted in her lonely house ; some are in high places and some in low, scattered and dead, and youth all gone,—and you go away over the knoll with the picture of the weary, pleading face of the school-mistress in your thought. You did not understand her then, poor heart ! You did not know yourself, nor why, as the years went on, such a tremor of strange joy came to you in the autumnal woods, and your ears rang with vague voices calling from the future, “come hither,” and the dawn of something wondrously fair was before you. It has passed now, and you need no human tongue to interpret what is said in these fading leaves and low dirges of the October wind. Early manhood, early womanhood, the unfolding of the rose of life. None are watching you now beneath the golden screen of the uplands, so you may let the buried visions come forth. You smile, maybe faintly, but your pulse is quicker. Ah, how many times has the fall, in dyed garments like him of Bozrah, stood on these hills since your hope was flushed as gloriously ! Some bright phantoms, of course, you have followed, and some you have abandoned ; yet the old dream of good, the imperishable good, does not wholly die. But once all the landscape was spring ; and the lilies bloomed, and the winds shook odors as they passed, and the birds were in tune with your heart. You think of the one peerless face

that filled your vision, and the great hope beyond ! But you have grown stronger, sterner since, and the world thinks, wiser. Busy days, mature experience, gray hairs, the scars of many a battle with the world. But are the lilies in your heart ? Is life as noble a boon, and arched by as grand a sky ? What are the russet fields saying to you, and the withering herbage at your feet ? You are too candid to sneer, and too sad to smile. You found early enough that the bloom gets rubbed from the soul, that the conflict is hard to the conqueror, and that the soil of sin is deep within. Soon enough you learned that you had misread the heart of man, and miscalculated your own uncertain strength. Well, indeed, if you let the Good Shepherd lead you now.

With sober face you have passed over the pleasant upland, and down the glen where the stream tinkles over its rocky channel, and through the open glade where the light is warm on the grass, and it seems that some magnetic spell has drawn you on, for you come out at the old country church. It is lonely there in the stillness of the afternoon. The swallows have left the mossy eaves. A blue-jay calls in the distant trees, and the dead leaves rustle in the walk to the dingy door. How often have you stood, in the quiet of Sabbath mornings, holding a parent's hand, on those rough steps, while the honest country folk gathered, saluting each other with cheerful talk ere they entered the open door. And how peaceful and solemn seemed the place within, where prayer was so sincere, and the pastor led the flock to the green pastures of the divine love. Way-

ward and thoughtless though you were, the sacred influences that fell upon you here passed deep into the texture of your being. Many a night, years ago, when alone, have visited you the blessed memories of this quiet sanctuary ; and the charm still lingers. The pastor's kindly voice, the christening, the wedding, the funeral, the confirmation hymn, and prayer and sermon and sacred festival,— associations as deep as life are bound up with what was seen and experienced here. Ah, had you only followed the better angel, had you only kept the fresh glow of devotion alive, the retrospect of life would hardly be what it is now. And you cannot lean there on the church-yard wall, where clings the unpruned bramble, with the gauzy, autumnal sky above you, and the far-off complaining murmurs of the landscape in your ears, without still, deep thought. Is not the "narrow way" after all the best? Page after page of human history is opened to your view. How sad the waste of talent that you have seen. How affecting the lessons of a frail, erring humanity. Pleasure, wealth, office, empty adulation, it all ends here, you say, looking at the graves within the enclosure. Their ranks have lengthened fast: more names, new epitaphs. Reverently you enter ; but it seems strange that so many whom you knew in their activity and buoyant hope should be lying here. And why not you? There is the little mound which you have never forgotten in your wanderings, and the long grass is growing over it, grass that is yet green, though the roses are faded and the forget-me-nots are dead. But one frost-pink is bloom-

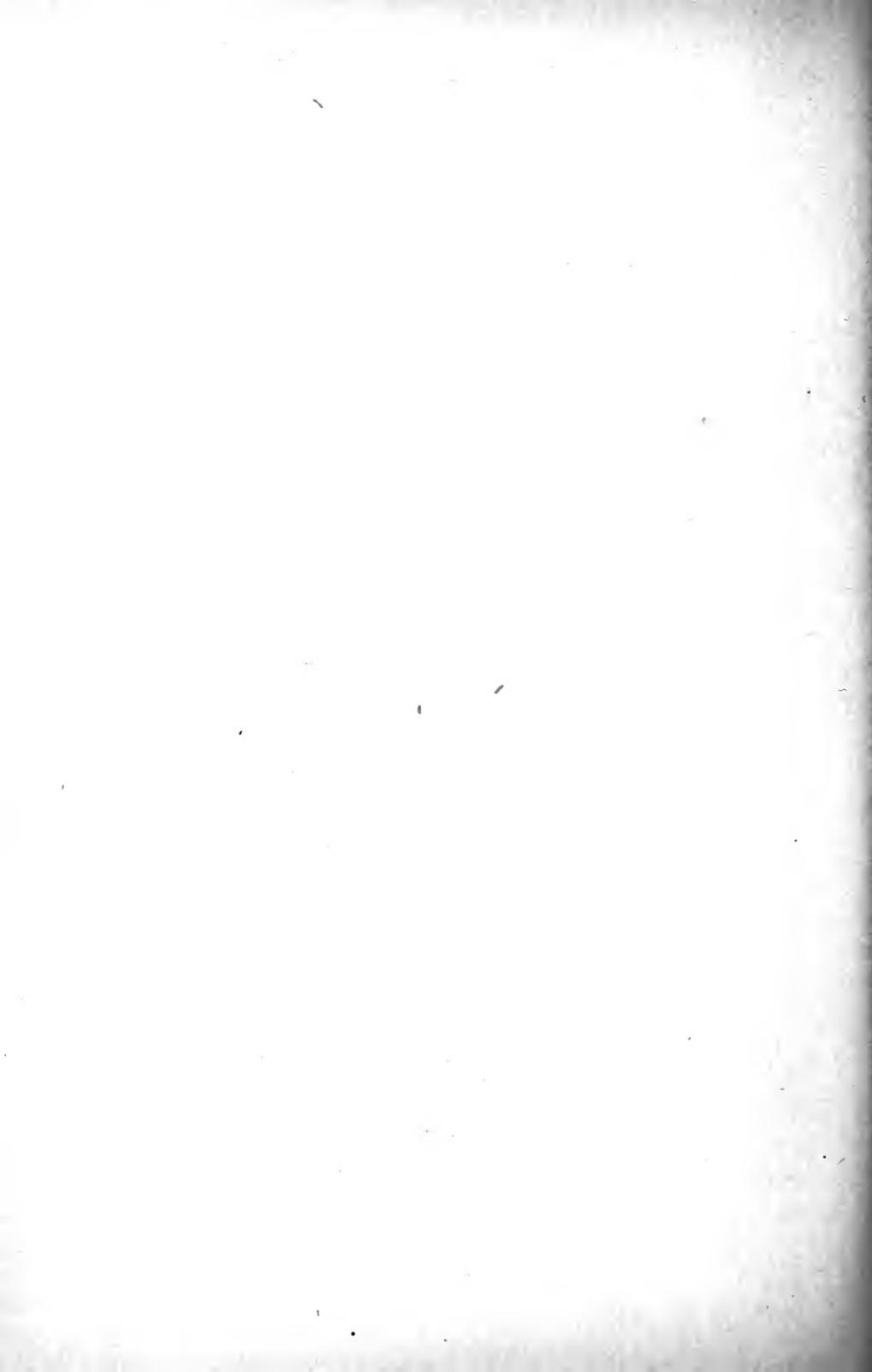
ing still, the gentian flower, blue and delicate and pure, looking to heaven with serene and hopeful eye. It has been many years since one sad day you stood here and saw the dust sprinkled on what was so dear. It did not seem that you could smile for a long time after that ; and the flowers looked cruel to be so sweet, and the May days mocked you with their unfolding beauty, and you missed so much in the house, that was everywhere haunted by the perfume of a joy that had vanished. Dear spot ! no wonder that heaven seemed but a little way off when you placed the precious treasure here, and that the benediction of the risen Saviour to his disciples, " peace be unto you," had a new meaning, and that a home where there would be no separations was more and more desired. Well is it, if the bright path of the loved one heavenward is clear to you now, and in spirit you thither aspire. But other graves that are very sacred to you are here, or somewhere. That of a father, or mother, or sister, or of one dearer than all, and who, vanishing, left the whole earth empty. Ah, what are the vain shadows that men pursue ? What now seems the glare of fashion, the pride of place, the glitter of wealth ? How far remote from what is of most real and blessed import is the bustle and jar of the mercenary, sordid world. It all went on the same when these graves were filled, and so it will when you depart. The circle that misses you will narrow more and more, and after a few years none will remember you among the living. Tired hands, weary brain, aching heart, will not rest be sweet ? But after all, musing here, memories of healing and of

peace steal softly into your thought. The days have not all been bleak. The road has not all been uneven. You have had your part of the good here,— perhaps more than many. “In ways that you knew not” you have been led often by the “still waters.” Something precious you have gathered when the thorns were sharpest. Even in burials you were conscious of a treasure that the earth could not claim. And a Father’s hand has been touched by you more than once in the darkness. After all, you believe that it is good to live. Like the radiance falling from the October sun through the crimson trees, flecking the grass with gold amid the shadows, so are the days dark and bright; and the bright are more than the dark, the sweet more than the bitter. With this uplift of your spirit your eyes are raised; and as meet your gaze the hills in their royal vestments, and the tender rose tints of the horizon, and glimpses of the valley in its dream of peace, you say, “Surely if this is the perishing, what must not be the imperishable?” And, starting up with the impulse of the thought, you pass again through the secluded lane, and across the hollow between the woods, and up the stream where the dead leaves eddy in the current, along the path where the sumachs flame and the dog-wood and hazel bushes and blackberry vines blend their fading colors, till on a grand, grassy eminence you stand, around you the great oaks, madder-red, and the maples, though half denuded, glowing yet like scarlet banners, and spread out below and afar the autumnal landscape, mellowed all over with the charm of mingled hues and

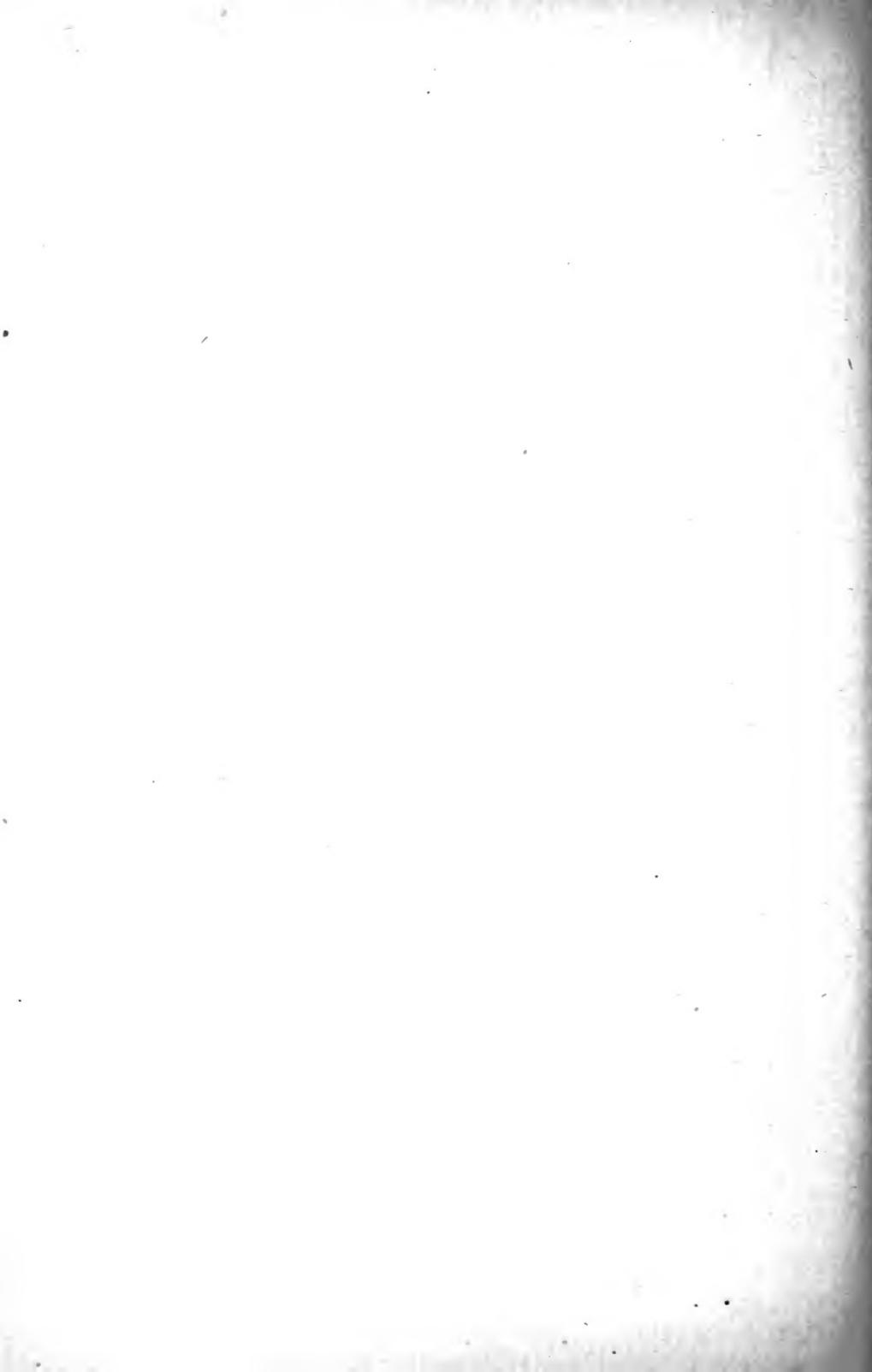
softly sifting light. In the distance are gleams of luminous water, and dashes of crimson and gold amid the hemlock glens, and quiet homesteads sleeping by orchards whose fruit is not all harvested, and complacent cattle wandering and reclining in the pastures, and old elms yellow and sere by the creek, clambered over with creepers bright as threads of fire, and the far-off mountains, purple and blue, and over all God's wondrous sky. The nuts drop now and then in the woods, and a squirrel barks, and there is a gentle rustle of falling leaves ; and the whirr of the partridge is faint down the thicket of the ravine. It is glorious you say,—very beautiful ! and, blending with the low repining sounds of the landscape, the distant, tender memories of your own soul moan and sing and float away, and a teasing pain, as of something drawing you onward, is in your heart. The calm and the beauty and the mystery of all stir a consciousness of the infinite. Onward your thought goes, beyond mountain and sky, beyond sense and time ; and in this grasp on the unseen, this yearning for the imperishable, you feel that it is not for a day that you live, not for a little hoarded gain, or a few thrills of sensual pleasure. Life seems awful in its grandeur. Its affections, its hopes, its aspirations plead for the eternal. You feel that all the delights of the past, all the glories of majestic nature, all the voices that with such mystic language speak deeper than articulate words, are hints of the possibilities of your being in a larger sphere. It cannot be, you say, that such a nature that takes up the wondrous meanings of creation, that

mingles with such rapt awe with the splendor of flower and sun and star, that gathers such a joy in the intimacies of kindred intelligences, that feels in itself such an expanding power of insight and dominion, is to perish like the ephemera of the twilight, or the leaf of autumn. And there, with the solemn sense of immensity brooding over you, with the forest odors touching your subtlest spirit with far-off dreams, comes a strange, deep home-sickness for heaven, for the gathering of the loved, for the vision of the unutterable beauty, for the purity and rest of the beloved in the Lord. And then, as meeting the necessities of your nature, you recognize the fitness and sweetness of the gospel. After all, you say, "He of Nazareth spake as never man spake." It is true, all true, this infinite need for God, this disclosure of grace in Him who is the likeness of the Father and the express image of His person. Surely "in Him is life, and His life is the light of men." And, coming out to the highway, whom should you meet but your pastor, dear to you for his hearty manhood. He, likewise, has been forth to commune with the spirit of the season, and on his face is the flush of an inward joy, and a light is in his eye that tells of a faith in things unseen. He takes your hand warmly, for in his own experience he reads yours, and says, as friend speaks to friend: "In your own heart are the intimations of immortality. This day have come to you the visitings of God. Is there any such light as that shining in the face of Jesus Christ? Is there any sure anchor to the soul but the blessed hope that is in Him? In a little

while the fever and the fret of this life will be over. But the keen, immortal spirit renewed in love, its triumph and joy have but begun. Let us go back to our work with this day's experience illumined by the divine word in our hearts. The past is gone. Let us live wisely in the present, and feel, in the use of our blessings, that the Lord is leading us and training us for His holy habitation." And you say, "Amen, amen."



NATURE, HUMANITY, RELIGION.



XXII.

A G A S S I Z.

ONE revelation of God is His material universe, and the more we know of this the better able shall we be to use the wondrous gift of life as it was designed. All knowledge is good, and that which instructs men to be holy is the best. While we attach an infinite value to the word of God as expressed in the Bible, we must not forget that by the word also were made the things that are seen. God expresses Himself in all His works. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." There is really no antagonism in the revelations of the Almighty, His written word, and His infinite works. We see but a part now of the perfect meaning,—enough to direct us to the way of everlasting life, but not the whole that may contribute to the possible advantages of man. Those who interpret the meanings of the spiritual and of the physical universe are both showing the Divine thought and will. If they make now and then discords in their utterance, we may be sure that there is harmony below them. Whatever man may say, God does not contradict Himself. While we rejoice unspeakably that He has made the path of salvation so plain that none need err therein ; that He has shown the heavy-laden a place of rest, and those

who hunger and thirst for righteousness how they may be filled,— we are not to imagine that no blessing attends the discovery of the wonderful verities of His hands, which men call Nature, or that in the uses of physical knowledge there are not benefits in a large sense to both body and soul. A fair sight of what the great scientists have found out and reduced to practical uses would not only fill most beholders with astonishment, but excite a profound gratitude for their agency in promoting our human welfare. How few, for instance, know or think, as they send or receive telegrams that are so important to their interests, of the long and laborious studies that prepared the way for modern telegraphy.

The same may be said of the application of steam to locomotives, the printing-press, photography, electrotyping, the telescope and microscope, physiological truth, and all the vast subjects of science and its applications. A person deeply in earnest in the pursuit of truth retires to his laboratory, or pursues his studies in obscurity in converse with lonely Nature, and the bustling world does not give him credit for much usefulness there, with his acids or salts or gases, his stones and weeds and bones and insects and scrapings of the deep sea's bottom ; his strange instruments ; his quiet indifference to the business and pleasures of mankind : yet what he is discovering or inventing becomes in due time a mighty factor in the great forces of the world's concerns. It appears in sanitary knowledge ; in the economies of industry and commerce ; in speedy transportation, time-saving ma-

chinery, beautiful fabrics, more wholesome food, grander power over nature and her possessions, more perfect demonstrations of the creative wisdom and benignity. These investigations, apparently so remote from the practical concerns of life, show finally their intimate connection with every thing of human interest and advantage ; and those who are doing most for man's material good are those who, to the common eye, seem to be engaged in the most unpractical and useless occupations. But profound studies of the physical world, however far removed they may seem from the utilities of life, are still the richest contributions to this end. They finally not only eventuate in human comfort and temporal well-being, but they co-operate with and supplement the knowledge that, by its immediate relation to the soul, is termed spiritual. It is, therefore, true that great naturalists and *savans* are among the world's benefactors. They earn and deserve the applauding recognition of their noble services to mankind, who through them are helped on to greater dominion over both Nature and themselves.

Of the most illustrious names that have promoted the cause of useful science in the present generation, none is higher than that of Agassiz. While I am prevented by lack of time for due preparation to do any thing like justice to the labors and character of this noble student and interpreter of the works of God, I have too profound a recognition of his greatness to let the opportunity pass without giving at least some feeble tribute to his memory. Louis John Rudolph Agassiz was largely

and richly endowed. His mind was fashioned on a colossal scale. His temperament was lively and enterprising, his reasoning faculties keen and comprehensive, his nature deeply impressible to all excellent influences, and his physical constitution of such a frame as to endure the most laborious efforts and activities. His early youth gave promise of rare intelligence, and it was his good fortune to receive his first instructions from a Christian mother, who was gifted and accomplished beyond the usual range of womankind. He was tractable and enthusiastic as a pupil, needing no stimulus but a love of learning to keep aglow the ardor of studious pursuit. At an early age he had become intimate with the naturalists of the Continent, who recognized and applauded his genius ; and as a young man he enjoyed the friendship, among others, of Martius, Cuvier, Schelling, Döllinger, and Humboldt. Before the age of thirty he was known to the scientific society of Europe, and had received honorable distinction from universities and learned bodies. With the most remarkable industry he prosecuted investigations covering fields but little examined, and commanding more and more his talents and attainments to the most accomplished scientists of the world. To give any really intelligible view of his enormous labors through his lifetime would require the compass of a good-sized treatise. . His work on the Fresh-Water Fishes of Europe ; on Fossil Fishes, which occupied ten years of labor ; the Zoölogical Nomenclator, containing an enumeration of all the genera of the animal kingdom ; his *Bibliotheca* of Zoölogy and

Geology ; his valuable papers on the echinoderms ; his extensive studies of the glaciers and the glacial system ; his investigations in conchology ; his vast work, entitled " Contributions to the Natural History of the United States ; " his multifarious contributions to popular science by papers in periodicals and journals in this country and Europe, and by numerous lectures, — show the amazing fertility of his genius, and his almost incredible industry.

During these fruitful and toilsome years, besides preparing for the press this vast amount of valuable scientific matter, he has made most diligent personal investigations over wide areas of the earth to study physical facts and to verify his theories. He explored Germany and Switzerland on foot ; wandered over the British Isles ; pursued his critical labors with the Coast Survey all along the Atlantic shores of the United States ; familiarized himself by personal observation with the geology of New York, the great Lake Superior region and the Rocky Mountains ; spent a long period in the wilderness of the Amazon ; and, in fact, carried his studies in portions of the earth most rich in subjects that could best interpret this wonderful universe.

Agassiz worked with a definite aim, and his studies were undertaken with reference to some general question, and made a test of the value and soundness of some general principle. " The papers and works upon echinoderms aimed at a classification of these animals, and a better appreciation of their structural differences from the other types. The monographs upon shells,

living and fossil, were prepared with a view to testing the range of distribution of species in past ages, and the limits of their special characters. The researches on fossil fishes are intended to show the relations of living and fossil species, and their embryonic development in one of the most extensive classes of the animal kingdom, the existence of which upon earth may be traced back to the earliest periods in which animal life was called into being. The investigations upon the glaciers were called forth by a desire to connect the history of the physical changes our globe has undergone with the phenomena exhibited by the developments of the organic kingdom." Everywhere in his works we discover a tendency to the most extensive generalizations ; while in every instance the knowledge of the facts, a candid study of the most minute relations of his subjects, has been his constant aim in all his investigations. His searching and comprehensive inquisitions into nature led to the belief of distinct types of the animal kingdom, and the theories of Darwin and Herbert Spencer have had no opponent so able and thoroughly scientific as he.

Agassiz, on purely scientific grounds, declares himself led to the belief in an Almighty Creator of the Universe ; in fact, he regards His existence established by the most rigorous demonstration. He shows that species do not insensibly pass into each other, but that each has its appointed period, and is not connected, except in the order of time, with its predecessor. He says (I quote his own language) : "An invisible thread in all

ages runs through this immense diversity, exhibiting as a general result the fact that there is a continual progress in development ending in man, the four classes of vertebrates presenting the intermediate steps, and the invertebrates the constant accessory accompaniment. Have we not here the manifestation of a mind as powerful as prolific? the acts of an intelligence as sublime as provident? the marks of goodness as infinite as wise? the most palpable demonstration of the existence of a personal God, author of all things, ruler of the universe, and dispenser of all good? This, at least, is what I read in the works of creation."

Such testimony, drawn from purely scientific sources, and independent of all other evidence, must have enormous weight.

I could not prepare the way for what I wish to say about this great naturalist as a man without making this reference to his works, though for any thing like an exact and satisfactory account one must look to the memorials that his scientific friends will prepare of him, or to his works themselves. His death, in the full vigor of his intellectual strength, when he was giving a more decided impulse to scientific education than ever before, and when he was better prepared, by the possession of the vast accumulations of his museum, to use his immense stores for the promotion of human knowledge in the domain of nature, cannot, humanly speaking, be too much lamented. It is likely that it was precipitated by the tremendous strain of his faculties in the gigantic enterprises of his genius, added perhaps to the solicitude

and disappointment that I am told he experienced in not securing the financial aid that he sought from the public funds of his adopted State in support of his museum,—in the work of carrying out his noble plans for making the institution the efficient agency that he desired.

What we note, in addition to the vast knowledge and intellectual greatness of the man, is his admirable and noble character. He had a remarkable sweetness of disposition. There was always around him a sunny atmosphere, and none could be with him without feeling the magnetism of his great, warm heart. His pupils—and they are numerous and cultivated—bear consenting testimony to his cheerful and affectionate spirit, his cordial interest in their prosperity and success, and his large, strong sympathies with all that appeals to generous human sensibilities. He inspired them with the ardor of his own bright and pure enthusiasm, and nothing that was mean or selfish could thrive in the earnestness of the pursuit of truth in which he engaged them. It is easy, therefore, to see how deep became the personal attachments of those who were under his instruction: how they revered and loved him. There could be no better evidence of his genial, affectionate, sympathetic disposition than the power that he had over ardent and gifted natures, and the sweet impressions that he has left on the lives of so many of the truest and most interesting people in the land. It would seem that his soul had drank in the loveliness of the wonderful and beautiful page of nature, and that he reflected in his own life the light and cheerfulness that lie on the works of God.

There was in him, too, a simplicity, a child-like naturalness, as admirable as it was instinctive. With the half-educated — those ambitious merely of the *name* of learning — there is often noticed a conceit of knowledge, an ostentation of attainments, an assumption of superiority, a kind of dogmatism and arrogance that are repulsive and absurd. There was no shadow of this in Agassiz. With all his mental grandeur and vast acquirements, he was still the humble pupil of nature, the unpretending citizen, the quiet, urbane, courteous gentleman. In his simple, natural way, he went about his work, intent upon accomplishing the ends of science, and oblivious, apparently, of what the world was thinking of him. In his lectures, his private instructions and social intercourse, his travels, and his fatiguing and exacting labors, he carried a serene and artless spirit, whose sincerity was very winning and impressive. He was utterly free from the affectations of the pedant, and the robust genuineness of the man had a wholesome and stimulating flavor that made his society delightful.

I shall never forget a little incident of his life, which I merely mention because it gives a key to his character. I was with him once in the small cabinet of a college, which he was examining with a good deal of interest, and where he was just as modest as if all the scientific treasures of the earth were before his eyes, when a singularly formed turtle-shell from the Mississippi was shown him, with the request that he should name the species to which it belonged. Taking it into his hand,

with the candor of an unspoiled child he said: "I don't know this." The confession surprised us, as we knew that the study of turtles was a favorite branch of investigation with him, and that here he was profoundly learned. In a moment or two, however, he remarked, very quietly: "Ah! I see; it is a malformation," which it really was, though it required vast knowledge of this sort of creatures to detect the fact. We can all imagine how the commonplace professor, desirous of keeping up a name for knowledge, would have managed to conceal his ignorance.

One mark of Agassiz's greatness was in this freedom from all vain ostentation, all pretence of learning, to secure attention to himself. The cause of truth was infinitely dear to him; and he saw such boundless wealth in the storehouse of the universe, that his mind always kept the attitude of a humble learner and a patient inquirer of nature's manifold and majestic meanings. It was this candor, modesty, simplicity, a perennial freshness of spirit in connection with his massive intellect, that enabled him to pursue with such eagerness and success the studies that have rendered his name immortal. The frame of mind in which he lived was suited to the happiest prosecution of his chosen labors, to the search for and the recognition of the wondrous truths of nature. It was enough for him to find what the record of creation said, and in the presence of the august revelation he was lowly and docile as a child.

And this leads me to mention one more feature of his character, which, blended with the others, expressed his

nobleness,— and that is, his reverent spirit. He realized deeply the grandeur and the uses of life. All that was related to man's interests and place upon the earth was sacred to him. He felt, in his investigations of this mysterious frame of things, that he was searching out the meanings of God. There was constantly before him the evidences of the Almighty's creative wisdom and benevolence, and his daily thought was all vital with the consciousness of the Infinite Supreme. So he lived face to face, as it were, with the glorious and solemn facts of a present Deity. Reading so constantly the records of the divine wisdom and love, and penetrated so deeply with a sense of life's object and possibilities, he bore about with him a spirit of reverential awe,— a recognition of God that was both an inspiration and a joy. In such a habit of life his heart could never grow old.

The poetical tribute that Mr. Longfellow addressed to him on his fiftieth birthday, which so vividly portrays his beautiful career, has now a touching significance :—

It was fifty years ago,
In the pleasant month of May,
In the beautiful Pays de Vaud,
A child in its cradle lay.

And Nature, the old nurse, took
The child upon her knee,
Saying, “Here is a story-book
Thy Father has written for thee.”

"Come, wander with me," she said,
 Into regions yet untrod,
And read what is still unread
 In the manuscripts of God."

And he wandered away and away
 With Nature, the dear old nurse,
Who sang to him night and day
 The songs of the universe.

And whenever the way seemed long,
 Or his heart began to fail,
She would sing a more wonderful song,
 Or tell a more marvellous tale.

So she keeps him still a child,
 And will not let him go,
Though at times his heart beats wild
 For the beautiful Pays de Vaud.

Though at times he hears in his dreams
 The Ranz des Vaches of old,
And the rush of the mountain streams
 From glaciers clear and cold ;

And the mother at home says, "Hark !
 For his voice I listen and yearn ;
It is growing late, and dark,
 And my boy does not return !"

But his mortal career has closed ; unexpectedly he has passed away to the larger life, leaving both hemispheres, wherever science is honored, in mourning. Nevermore on earth shall we see that noble form and

benignant face illuminated by the generous soul. Nevermore shall we welcome with honest pride the news of his successful labors, or mark admiringly the sagacity and magnitude of his glorious enterprises in the cause of knowledge. That capacious brain teems no more with fruitful thought. The friendly hand is still. The loving eye sleeps while the world applauds. It is more than a private sorrow that weeps over the grave of Agassiz. His work here seemed but half done, though already so gigantic ; who shall take it up where he dropped it for another field ?

And yet we thank God that he has lived. He is one of the benefactors of mankind. His memorial is in the great truths that he has enunciated to mankind. They are not barren and dead and cold and hopeless, but vital with the meanings of God ; full of hopeful inspirations ; fragrant and luminous with the messages of a goodness that pervades all things, and in which the universe exists. His influence, therefore, cannot perish, and, though the world's loss would have been less had a score of those who live highest in mere official position been removed rather than him, we bow to the dispensation, and are grateful that a being so gifted and so useful has done his part so nobly in this generation. There was no soil upon his name that could stain its honor. In every relation of life he was pure. As husband, parent, citizen, philosopher, he was blameless among men. In many a household, in many a studious chamber, besides in the home that was consecrated by his presence, is there a sad yearning now for the light that has gone out

with his departure. But there is no place, except his own vacant fireside, over which the shadow falls more heavy, and the chill of death strikes deeper, than in bereft and desolate Penikese, where the group of pupils that gathered at the charm of his genius bow like orphans, and through their tears see the pictures that they cherished of their long, sweet fellowship with him fade and vanish. The flowers on his grave are dewy and fragrant with the love and reverence of sincere souls throughout the world. His royal life goes on.

XXIII.

S U M M E R.

GREAT virtues, associated with great talents and beneficent service, are not a spectacle so frequent in public affairs as to command no special observation. In the selfish ambitions and political intrigues that are so conspicuous in national annals, it is always inspiring and instructive to find examples of character that illustrate devotion to the highest principles of patriotism and the noblest type of citizenship. Of such is the illustrious scholar and statesman in whose memory we bring the tribute of our gratitude and applause. It is due to the cause of civil liberty which he advocated, to the fair humanities which he represented, and to the manly virtues and righteous principles which he advanced, that his great name be held up for the recognition and approval that it eminently deserves.

I cannot portray the noble services of this distinguished patriot, without some reference to the personal qualities that made him remarkable. He was endowed by nature with a capacious and vigorous intellect, an iron will, and a temperament of high and unconquerable energy. His memory, which was originally retentive, was cultivated to a rare degree of power. With

the most indefatigable industry, animated by an enthusiasm for knowledge, he had gathered information from all available sources, and was master of all learning that could utilize his gift of statesmanship. His acquaintance with literature was vast and critical in both ancient and modern composition. He was an intelligent lover and patron of art. In science and philosophy he was furnished with the latest conclusions of the most exact investigations. Probably no man living was more profoundly versed in the laws of nations, or more deeply grounded in the vital principles of jurisprudence. His studies and meditations led him to the largest views of the interests of mankind, and to an elevation where he could observe the value and workings of doctrines of universal applicability. The atmosphere in which he habitually lived was that of the scholar ; and if he was ever accused of impracticable theories, it was because he would not employ questionable expedients in striving to promote the permanent interests of mankind. As an orator he stands unrivalled among the brilliant list in our country of those who have shed lustre on the bar, the pulpit, and the halls of legislation. His logical mind, the elegance of his culture, his profound convictions, his exhaustive research, the moral attitude of his position, his fearless independence, and his wonderful mastery of language, in connection with the causes for which he pleaded, made him the exponent of some of the noblest specimens of eloquence that have graced the present century. His speeches on "The True Grandeur of Nations," "Freedom National, Slavery

Sectional," "The Crime against Kansas," the "Barbarism of Slavery," "Our Foreign Relations," are among the great masterpieces of classic oratory, and will stand, with the utterances of Pitt and Fox and Burke, models of elaborate, dignified, and convincing speech, as long as the English language endures.

But however great his accomplishments and talents, I should not speak of him here had he not consecrated them to the service of the republic and humanity. The time has passed when a review of his devotion to the strong convictions of an enlightened philanthropy can be stigmatized as promotive of sectional animosity. He lived long enough and illustrated sufficiently the breadth of his sympathies, and the fairness and wisdom of his statesmanship, to dispel the prejudices of those who once thought his influence and endeavors were inimical to the interests of the whole country.

There is something admirable to the ingenuous mind in that chivalrous magnanimity that could lead a young and gifted scholar, highly bred and educated, surrounded by aristocratic connections, and intimate with the distinguished society of two continents, to accept, instead of a career that would ensure ease, present applause, and happiness, one that would ensure odium, opposition, and peril, and to pursue it in the face of detraction and violence until it was successful. If there could have been a temptation to a young man of such splendid prospects to share an immediate success, to gain the smiles of influential politicians and the plaudits of the masses, in a word, to secure worldly favor of a very seductive

kind, that temptation must have come to him. But whatever the solicitation, he put it aside for a rough path, and great burdens, and a thorny crown of suffering. He showed as convincingly as action can show that he loved justice more than pleasure ; that his faith in right was greater than his fear of detraction ; that his passion for liberty was higher than personal ambition ; and that to promote the interests of mankind was the supreme concern of his life. Without seeking for official place, while free in the expression of political sentiments, it came to him as the testimony of confidence in his patriotism and ability. But he did not accept his election to the senate of the United States with any subscription to party bonds or policy. It was only with perfect independence to act according to his best convictions that he consented to take his seat in that dignified branch of the national legislature.

The principles that animated him on his entrance into public life he maintained to its close. He never swerved from the path that he deemed right, whatever might be the consequences to himself. History, I think, affords no case of one engaged prominently in civil affairs where the convictions of an enlightened conscience have been more strictly adhered to than in his ; where one has been less influenced by popular clamor ; where there has been a loftier independence in the discharge of duty, greater disdain of temporizing expedients or personal consequences. This phase of his character I cannot impress too strongly, or hold up too high for admiring imitation. He was a man of convic-

tions, of strong, clear conscience ; a man who dared to do what the emergency seemed to require ; a man who, in the support and vindication of principle, was as inflexible as Cæsar, as just as Aristides, as pure as Cato. Knowing, as we do, the general character of our legislative assemblies throughout the country, the lack of individual conscience, of a generous disinterestedness, of a zeal for the public good, of high-minded integrity ; seeing, as we have to see, the alarming evidences of ignorance, demagogism, and corruption,—we cannot appreciate too highly this strong, conscientious, uncompromising soul, entering upon the discharge of duties that would bring him into disfavor with the majority ; while even from friends he could expect but a doubtful or lukewarm support. It is the moral attitude of the man to which I here refer, his fearless courage, his indomitable patience, his inflexible purpose, his lofty faith in the triumph of righteous principle, and the intrepidity with which he flung himself into the cause on which he believed depended the honor, the utility, and the perpetuity of the republic. The spectacle is reassuring and inspiring in contrast with the dark pictures of personal greed and cowardice and political degeneration that mark the times.

It was not because man was black or white, because he was of one nationality or another, that he espoused his cause, but because he was Man, and, by virtue of his creation and endowments, the inheritor of the right to himself and all that he could fairly win by the best use of his faculties and opportunities. I do not here

impeach the motives of those who in good faith opposed Mr. Sumner's opinions and policy, and who saw the facts as they then existed in different relations and meanings from his view. We greatly err unless we make due allowance for the influences of education, sectional claim, personal interests, the power of political passions, and manifold factors that operate in the field of political controversy. These facts no philosophic observer can ignore, and these help explain the impediments with which Mr. Sumner had to contend in his earlier career in the senate.

I am not acting the part of a historian, and therefore refer to events only to illustrate more clearly the character that we are now contemplating. It will be remembered by some how difficult it was for Mr. Sumner in those early days to overcome the obstacles that were interposed in the senate to his introduction of any proposition in whose discussion he could enunciate the great doctrines of human liberty that were so near his heart ; and how at last it was only by a piece of ingenious, yet most legitimate, parliamentary tactics that he obtained the floor to present the subject of "Freedom National, Slavery Sectional." I shall never forget how the opening paragraph of that speech thrilled me, nearly twenty-two years ago, as reading it I saw in my mind's eye the intrepid senator rising amid the scornful and indignant looks of a hostile majority, and, with a voice that had been suppressed by the courteous advantage of those in power, declare, "Beyond all controversy or cavil it is strictly in order. And now

at last, among these final crowded days of our duties here, but at this earliest opportunity, I am to be heard, not as a favor, but as a right. The graceful usages of this body may be abandoned, but the established usages of debate cannot be abridged. Parliamentary courtesy may be forgotten, but parliamentary law must prevail. The subject is broadly before the senate. By the blessing of God it shall be discussed."

But such devotion as his to the doctrines of the fathers and founders of the republic ; such a fearless advocacy of liberty, at that time of intense political agitation,—could not fail to ensure painful personal consequences. It was only after many provocations that he was moved to severe but suitable reply. His memorable speech on the "Crime against Kansas" really cost him his life, for from the shock of the murderous assault that followed its delivery he never fairly recovered. Its violence would have killed outright one of less perfect health and magnificent physique than his. I am free to confess that only in one other case in my lifetime did an intentional physical injury to a public man strike me with a hurt so excruciating. It seemed that in those blows patriotism, virtue, liberty, law, the very heart of the republic, were smitten ; for it was not the man merely that I then beheld prostrate, but the ideas, the sympathies, the hopes, the justice that found in him so eloquent an advocate.

I suppose that comparatively few are aware of the tortures that Mr. Sumner endured in the treatment that was finally adopted for his relief, or the mental anguish

that he experienced in view of duties that pressed for performance. In a letter which he wrote to me, describing his condition, about two years after his calamity, a letter dated May 9, 1858, he says: "From the beginning of my calamity I miscalculated its extent, and lived in weekly, almost daily, expectation of my accustomed strength, so that I might again resume my active duties. Only six months ago I thought myself on the verge of perfect recovery, when, without any adequate cause, after only a slight exertion, I found myself debilitated in the extreme, unable to walk without pain, or rise from my chair except slowly, and like an old man of ninety. This condition is now again passing away, so that I think of returning to Washington to vote on questions of interest. But I have learned that I must regard myself for a long time to come as an invalid, especially avoiding those very labors which I have most at heart, and seeking the restoration of my shattered system through repose of the injured part, and incessant exercise in the open air. But I feel a deep disappointment at seeing so much of life and precious opportunity pass away unemployed."

To a great soul like his, spurred by a high ambition for usefulness, to feel crippled in the very blossom and noon of life, forced, like a caged eagle, to the seclusion of the invalid, while eager to serve the high interests of his fellow-men, was a bitter trial. I should fail to note an amiable feature of his character if I did not relate that through the darkest period of his sufferings, and the years that followed, no unbecoming word of complaint

passed his lips. He had no malediction for the hand that dashed the brightness and vigor from his manhood. In his forbearance and fortitude are revealed but another aspect of his greatness.

Other and later trials has he known, sharp and rasping to a proud and sensitive spirit, but they too were borne with dignity and composure. From the period of his return to his place in the senate to the day that he breathed his last, his career has been a consistent exemplification of patriotic fidelity. We all know with what wisdom and devotion, during the war, he supported the government; how potent for good his influence on our foreign relations during years of disaster and threatening complication; how close he stood to Mr. Lincoln in life and death at the Capitol, and how generously and disinterestedly since the settlement of our civil discords he has dealt with every subject that could promote pacification, fraternal harmony, and the general good.

Indeed, one reviewing his public life sees all along how his labors were directed to practical and gracious ends. When the slave-power was menacing the republic, he sought to quell it. When rebellion had its hands upon the ark of the Union, he strove to preserve this sanctuary of liberty. When peace returned, he endeavored to utilize its advantage everywhere, without regard to past events or locality. When a powerful policy seemed about to precipitate difficulties with a foreign power, he interposed in time to avert the danger. To destroy old feuds, to ensure the rewards of industry, to extend the safeguards of righteous law, to have gov-

ernment discharge its proper functions throughout its whole jurisdiction, was the end he labored to promote. But in all the years of his devoted public service, whatever the criticism concerning his policy, he lived above the suspicion of corruption. Whatever his opportunities of personal emolument, his hands were clean. He might be accused of a dictatorial imperiousness of spirit, and of an impracticable political virtue, but none could impeach his honor. Of all the disgraceful imputations that stain our legislatures, he was free. No man ever dared approach Charles Sumner with a bribe, or even with a proposition that had a taint of dishonesty. No man could say that he ever sacrificed principle for the sake of gain, or to escape censure. No man could ever point to a sentence of his that was impure, or unbecoming the lips of truth.

I shall not even seem to strengthen this eulogium by comparing him with other names that, by eloquence, patriotism, and statesmanship, are nobly eminent in the records of our country. But without detracting in the least from the fame of those whom we justly admire and venerate, I can ask, without any doubt concerning the reply, if there has been among our public servants a character more lustrous with integrity than that of this great tribune of human rights ; if there has been an orator whose eloquence, springing from deeper sources, will survive to more remote generations ; if those legislative halls, sacred with historic associations, have contained a nature of more heroic mould; if learning, culture, the amenities of graceful citizenship, have had a more

distinguished representative ; if there has been shown a spirit more sincere, of larger sympathy, of purer aim, of loftier intelligence, of intenser patriotism, of more comprehensive statesmanship ? Has man had, in the struggles and trials of our national existence, a more tireless and accomplished advocate ? One more page of our parliamentary and legislative record is unsullied. We can point our children now to an example of public virtue at home without need of reference to Roman models. Amid the political degeneracy of the times, fair as a white lily on the sluggish pool, is this clean name, fragrant with honor. How puerile seems the gabble of politicians in the trumpet-peal of his inspiring speech ! How trivial seem the insignias of mere office, how empty the highest political station, beside a life ennobled and consecrated like his ! The grandeurs of wealth and title do not of themselves touch me ; but to those whose characters and deeds are messages of light, who move and replenish our higher energies, who emancipate life from its thralls and burdens, I instinctively bring the tribute of gratitude and admiration. I revered and loved Mr. Sumner for a greatness that was benignant. I am not ashamed of my tears in a grief that reaches the nation's heart, and goes far beyond the Atlantic. I am indebted to him as to few in this or any generation, and am thankful that I can cast my offering with those more expressive ones upon his coffin, before the dust covers it from human sight for ever. We thank God for this heroic and useful life. If one sign of fol-

lowing the Master is to suffer willingly for his little ones, to accept the cross and wormwood in the way of daily duty, then here was a token of discipleship. That life for many years was a sad one. I wish it could have been happier. As I think of it, it has a melancholy grandeur that is pathetic. And yet it was all sincerely and faithfully used to the last. A nation mourns. Yet we shall not honor our illustrious dead without heeding the lessons of his life. How few are left to battle with duplicity, peculation, and dishonesty in high places! Where are we to look for new champions of principle, who can wear the mantle of our dead patriot?

It is time that we purify our official stations of corruption. It is time that Christian manhood, sinewy, pure, and bold, be enthroned in seats of trust.

From those dead lips seems to come a summons to the people to take heed lest they be ruinously enthralled and deluded by the knavery of demagogues and time-servers. And if I hear any appeal from that bier, guarded so lovingly in the State House of Massachusetts, and to which millions turn sad eyes, it is that the suffrage of the people be given in intelligent conviction of what is right; that the trust of political power be committed to the incorruptible and vigilant and wise, who will serve in the fear of God; and that liberty, won through so many ages of struggle and suffering, be guarded with a sacred jealousy and transmitted to the latest generation.

Charles Sumner's earthly career is ended. He and

his fame are secure in the gratitude and affection of the commonwealth. What the venerable Bryant said of the good Lincoln on his death, can be said of this great champion of man:—

“Thy task is done, the bond are free ;
We bear thee to an honored grave,
Whose proudest monument shall be
The broken fetters of the slave.”

XXIV.

K I N G S L E Y.

FOR some twenty years Charles Kingsley has stood in the inner circle of those who have commanded the grateful tribute of my intellect and my heart. His remarkable writings have refreshed and instructed me. I have looked with admiration on his brilliant gifts and exalted character. His grand enthusiasm was contagious, and the breadth and quality of his manhood and his energetic genius have given me peculiar inspiration. I freely confess my indebtedness to him ; and, now that he is dead, I can do nothing less than cast one flower of gratitude and affection upon his grave, even though it be a poor, pale blossom of these wintry days.

The Rev. Charles Kingsley was descended from an ancient family, whose line of distinguished ancestry goes far back in English history. He was born in 1819, in Devonshire, England, whose beautiful scenery he has so graphically described, and was educated at home till fourteen years of age. At the University of Cambridge, which he entered early, he was noted for his spirited and generous disposition and intellectual brilliancy. He gained here a scholarship, and a first prize for classical, and a second for mathematical, attainments. His moral earnestness, his fine tastes and sympathies,

and enthusiasm for knowledge when a student, were prophetic of the remarkable career of the man. It is said that he studied law at first, but afterwards turned his serious attention to theology, entering, after his ordination, on the duties of the ministry as curate of Eversley, and soon after as rector of that parish. Here he continued to officiate until 1859, when he was appointed Professor of History in the University of Cambridge. In 1869 he was made Canon of Chester, and then Canon of Westminster; and for some years, until his death, was Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen and the Prince of Wales. Three or four years ago he visited the West Indies, near the scene of his "Westward, Ho!" and last winter he came to this country, where he was received with the most distinguished consideration. In the sierras of California, being exposed to a sudden change of temperature, he took a severe cold, which culminated in a violent attack of pleurisy, when, in June last, he reached Manito, Colorado, where his son, Maurice Kingsley, had resided for some years. This sickness, which was very dangerous, as described to me by the attending physician, no doubt so impaired his naturally robust constitution as to render him less capable of resisting the attack of the pulmonary inflammation from which he died in London on Sunday last, January 24, 1875.

In appearance Mr. Kingsley was, for many years, a picture of physical energy and health. He was accomplished in all manly exercises. Powerfully built, tall, muscular, spare of flesh, with a face whose lineaments

expressed both sensibility and strength of character, he was an impersonation of the alert and masculine vigor that breathes in his productions, and which characterized his life.

A nature like his could not be idle ; indeed, he seemed spurred on by a resistless impulse to a tireless activity. Early in his career appeared his "Village Sermons," the first of several volumes of stimulating discourses. While a young man, he published "Alton Locke, or the Autobiography of a Tailor," which produced a wide impression by its republican sentiments and sympathy with the working classes. There followed "Westward, Ho!" a powerful portraiture of English adventure in the Spanish Main, in the time of Elizabeth ; "The Saints' Tragedy," a dramatic poem of rare power, descriptive of the religious features of the Middle Ages ; "Yeast : a Problem," relating to the theological fermentation of the times ; "Loose Thoughts for Loose Thinkers ;" "Hypatia, or Old Foes with a New Face," a wonderful picture of the fifth century in the Orient, and the conflicts of Christianity with Pagan life and philosophy at Alexandria ; "Essays and Lectures ;" "New Miscellanies ;" "Glaucus," a study of science along the sea-coast ; "Two Years Ago," an instructive story of English life at the period of the Crimean War ; "Andromeda," a poem in hexameter verse ; "How and Why ;" "Hereward, the Last of the English ;" "At Last," a picturesque account of his late journey to the West Indies ; "Health and Education," and other works ; while at intervals of every few years a new volume of sermons

was given to the public. When we think of all this literary work, in connection with his pastoral and social and professional duties, we are struck with the fertility of his brain, and the extraordinary vitality of the man.

Kingsley had a sturdy and powerful energy, which breathes in every page of his compositions,—a swift, inspiring vigor, that strikes the soul as the fresh, pure, bracing air of the mountain bathes the face and lungs of the traveller, who feels his blood tingle and his chest dilate with the refreshing breath. The sweep and stress of his spirit comes to you with vitalizing power. This noble impetuosity and generous earnestness is natural to the man,—in him, indeed, there seems nothing affected. The great force wells up out of the depths of his soul like a fountain out of the deeps of the hills. Though trained in the classics, and familiar with the gracefulness and repose of Greek thought and art, he took no antique for his models,—his strong, flowing, intense style was his own as much as his strong-knit frame and teeming brain. A soul like his partook of the prophetic type. He wrote by a kind of inspiration. His subject possessed him, and his deliverance was in the direct, graphic, free utterance of one whose message has to be made. Constituted as he was of such rare intellectual fibre, and so finely endowed, he had aptitudes for a great variety of work,—for poetry, preaching, criticism, fiction, history, and science. As a preacher, how simple, straightforward, and earnest he was, like a man charged to speak a word from the Lord,—never daw-

dling over his topic, or thinking of embellishment, or appealing to unmanly feelings and motives, but swift and resonant like a trumpet-blast. Those short discourses of his, rarely exceeding fifteen minutes, are condensed messages of duty and hope and consolation and charity and faith in God ; shots from a heart all aflame with sights of the everlasting righteousness,—the Father of Spirits. With nature, in whose beauties he revelled, he was always at home, and at home, too, wherever there were human hearts to suffer or enjoy. How tender he could be, how spontaneous he was, how strong in his lines of description and portraiture ; with what vivid hues and clear lineaments he brings before you the wonders and glories of the natural world, and how subtly and finely he traces the scenes and qualities and experiences of human life. Whether it is a picture of the Thebaid or of Pagan Alexandria, the scenery of Devon or of the Spanish Main, the tumults of a mob or a saint alone with God, a hovel or a palace, a poor maiden in her bewilderment or a hero surcharged with a sense of duty, a Neo-Platonist or a Ritualistic clergyman, a sceptical physician or a Christian bishop, you have the clear stroke, the vivid portraiture, the interpretation of the inner sense.

These characteristics of his writings are but illustrations of his great, free, catholic nature. His churchmanship had vast breadth. His culture was wide. His view of human life was large. His apprehension of the forces at work in the world was strong and comprehensive. He saw in many directions, and viewed verities

at their heart. Conversant with what the old philosophies and polytheisms had done for man, he could give the reasons of his devotion to the blessed gospel, in whose light he found the key to man's duty and destiny. He never lost sight of the essential thing that makes life noble and valuable, while he seemed possessed with an ever-present consciousness of his calling to help where he could. So we see his strong sympathy with mankind, his contempt of shams, his love of liberty, his zeal for education, his hatred of cant and bigotry and priesthood; his belief in progress, in a heavenly Father who governs His universe according to the principles of His own eternal justice and eternal love. Kingsley's sympathies come out in some of his books,—in “Alton Locke,” “Hypatia,” “The Saints’ Tragedy,” for instance,—in a current so strong that the reader is fairly swept on into healthy and invigorating atmospheres. There are brief lyrical poems of his that touch our deepest nature wherever there is any sense of life’s pathos and earnestness. His “Three Fishers” is a specimen of the way that he enters into the experience of our toiling and sad humanity.

Three fishers went sailing out into the west,
Out into the west, as the sun went down ;
Each thought on the woman who loved him the best,
And the children stood watching them out of the town ;
For men must work, and women must weep,
And there’s little to earn, and many to keep,
Though the harbor bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the light-house tower,
And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down,
They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,
And the night-rack came rolling up ragged and brown ;
But men must work, and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden and waters deep,
And the harbor bar be moaning.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands
In the morning gleam, as the tide went down ;
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands
For those who will never come back to the town ;
For men must work, and women must weep,
And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep,—
And good-by to the bar and its moaning.

Kingsley's theology is not the musty and monkish lore that belongs to a sphere quite outside of ordinary human life. It is not a thing of notions and speculation, nor of routine and conventionality. He is vitalized with a sense of the duties and privileges of the life that now is. He believes in serving God with all the powers of the man,—the body as well as the soul ; while he teaches the necessity of curing physical ills, that proper treatment may be given to spiritual ones. He has been called the apostle of a "muscular Christianity ;" but, while he did not originate the expression, it is doubtless true that no man of our time has contributed more to the promotion of a manly religion,—one that is not only free from a narrowing and emasculating sacerdotalism, but separate also from the whining, canting, sour-faced

piety that ignores and depreciates the manifold uses of the world. No man has striven more to disclose the fact of a present God and heavenly Father, and to justify His ways to men. No man has seen more clearly the dangers that beset mankind, the elements of their glory and their shame, and what conserves their vital and enduring interests. No man has pleaded more eloquently for the sanctities of human affections and ties, the sacredness of the family, the preciousness of wife and child ; for a service of God that uses all gifts that are ours by birth, education, and grace. While clearly awake to the sceptical tendencies of the times, while deeply versed himself in the learning of the schools, he clings to the old creeds, to the historic Christ ; he finds in God manifest in the flesh, in the teachings and life and death of the crucified Nazarene, "the Light of the World," the pledge of, and the way to, the consummation of life's blessedness and salvation. Speaking as he does in so many engaging tones,—in poetry, sermon, review, fiction, history, and science,—Kingsley has wielded an influence more subtle and powerful than the casual reader and superficial thinker imagines. He wrote for a purpose,—wrote like a man profoundly alive to the present, its tendencies, dangers, needs,—and at the same time with the Christian's sympathies and faith, that deal with truth suited to all generations. Take the religious historical novel "*Hypatia*," and while it is a faithful picture of the world in the fifth century, delineating its gigantic evils and its hopeful life, the atrocities of religious fanaticism, the

scepticism, and the superstition and cruelty and demagogism and sensualism of the times, as well as the pure Christian spirit that was as the salt to preserve the good, he makes it all reflect the features of the present world and age that are so far removed. So, too, in "Westward, Ho!" "Two Years Ago," and other works, there come out some lesson of Christian heroism, some disclosure of the truths by which men live, some attestation of the divine righteousness, some retribution of injustice and transgression, some show of life in its real wants and triumphs, which bring their meaning with a penetrating and powerful emphasis to the heart. He is concerned with the ethics of life, — religion, that involves the whole of man's being in its motive and concernment. He detects the old foes of the race under their new and alluring masks, and tears away the lie. He has a quick scent for the real, the vital, the substantial, and gets the kernel amid any quantity of chaff that conceals it. There is something wonderfully strengthening and reassuring in his hold on the Eternal Goodness, while comprehending fully the causes of suffering and scepticism in the world, and all the hindrances to truth through the stupidity and follies and sins of men. He is one of those who recognizes the infinite life that is in all and that upholds all. He speaks not from hearsay ; is no compiler, no dispenser of old saws and well-dressed platitudes ; does not tell you to listen and receive, just because he has gathered something with an orthodox and a respectable label upon it, but because he has found a nourishment to life. In contrast with this keen,

earnest, manly, catholic nature, how trivial appear the pretensions of mere official position or the utterances of a perfunctory divinity. An archbishopric could add nothing to such a prophet's renown. For he is one of the teachers and rulers of men by the anointing of the Lord. No sect can confine such a spirit: his mission and message are to mankind, the redeemed of God everywhere.

It is not to be supposed that Mr. Kingsley was without faults; that his views were always right, that his judgment was never warped. His faults were those of a great, sincere, generous, enthusiastic nature, resolute in the service of Christ and humanity. In some things he is greatly open to criticism, and would be the last to resent it, if fairly done. He had a heroic spirit, with some of a hero's infirmities. What I hold up is his healthy Christian manhood; the fresh, vigorous, breezy force of his spirit, that was charged with moral integrity; his scorn of the low expedients of craft or tyranny or superstition; his passion for noble ideals of character. I see in him a warmth to kindle an enthusiasm for righteousness, confidence in man's better nature, a courage for the sake of truth, an unshaken faith in God. Men of his scope and calibre are never too many in the world; and when they come, those who are wise will give them heed. They help liberate men from the thralls of tradition, break down the partitions of caste, undo the cerements that enwrap forgotten truths, witness for the divine in man. Through them the old

faith has new vitality and significance. They make, in the present, a revelation fresh and sweet of the verities of God. Mr. Kingsley has left the impress of his spirit upon the age. He combines something of the best of the radical and the conservative ; shows that knowledge and faith can harmonize in a consecrated life ; is a reconciler of the material and spiritual ; a prophet of humanity ; a true minister of the "good news," because he took of the things of our Lord, and gave them to living souls.

Dying when hardly fifty-six years of age, we may say, humanly speaking, that he was prematurely cut off. Yet how his life was crowded with work, and how brave and true it was. I can think now of upwards of twenty volumes from his pen, which have gone on blessed errands to mankind. And besides this, how devoted a husband he was, how wise and good a father, how faithful as a pastor, how kind as a neighbor, how large a space he filled in the walks of cultured English life. The affliction goes from that home where wife and children mourn, to the palace of the Queen, to the studies of scholars, to the myriads in town and country who have felt the inspiration of his genius and been grateful for his thought, to the distant cottage by the springs of Colorado, where dwell old friends who have loved him long and well. But his light does not go out in the grave. We thank God for his strong testimony to the grace of the gospel of Christ, for his valiant manhood, for his quickening and enlightening ministry to

the men and women of to-day. He speaks to us still, and will continue to speak, while there is meaning in duty, and power in truth, and inspiration in love, that aspires and toils for the divine kingdom on earth. His speech and life, though many-toned, are one grand tune. Such a call as that in his poem, "The Day of the Lord," rings out to us now more impressively, if possible, than ever : —

The day of the Lord is at hand, at hand !
Its storms roll up the sky :
A nation sleeps starving on heaps of gold ;
All dreamers toss and sigh :
The night is darkest before the dawn, —
When the pain is sorest the child is born,
And the day of the Lord at hand.

Gather you, gather you, angels of God, —
Freedom, and Mercy, and Truth :
Come ! for the earth is grown coward and old :
Come down and renew us her youth.
Wisdom, Self-sacrifice, Daring, and Love,
Haste to the battle-field, stoop from above,
To the day of the Lord at hand.

Gather you, gather you, hounds of Hell, —
Famine, and Plague, and War ;
Idleness, Bigotry, Cant, and Misrule,
Gather, and fall in the snare !
Hirelings and Mammonites, Pedants and Knaves,
Crawl to the battle-field, sneak to your graves,
In the day of the Lord at hand.

Who would sit down and sigh for a lost age of gold,
While the Lord of all ages is here ?
True hearts will leap up at the trumpet of God,
And those who can suffer, can dare.
Each old age of gold was an iron age, too,
And the meekest of saints can find stern work to do
In the day of the Lord at hand.

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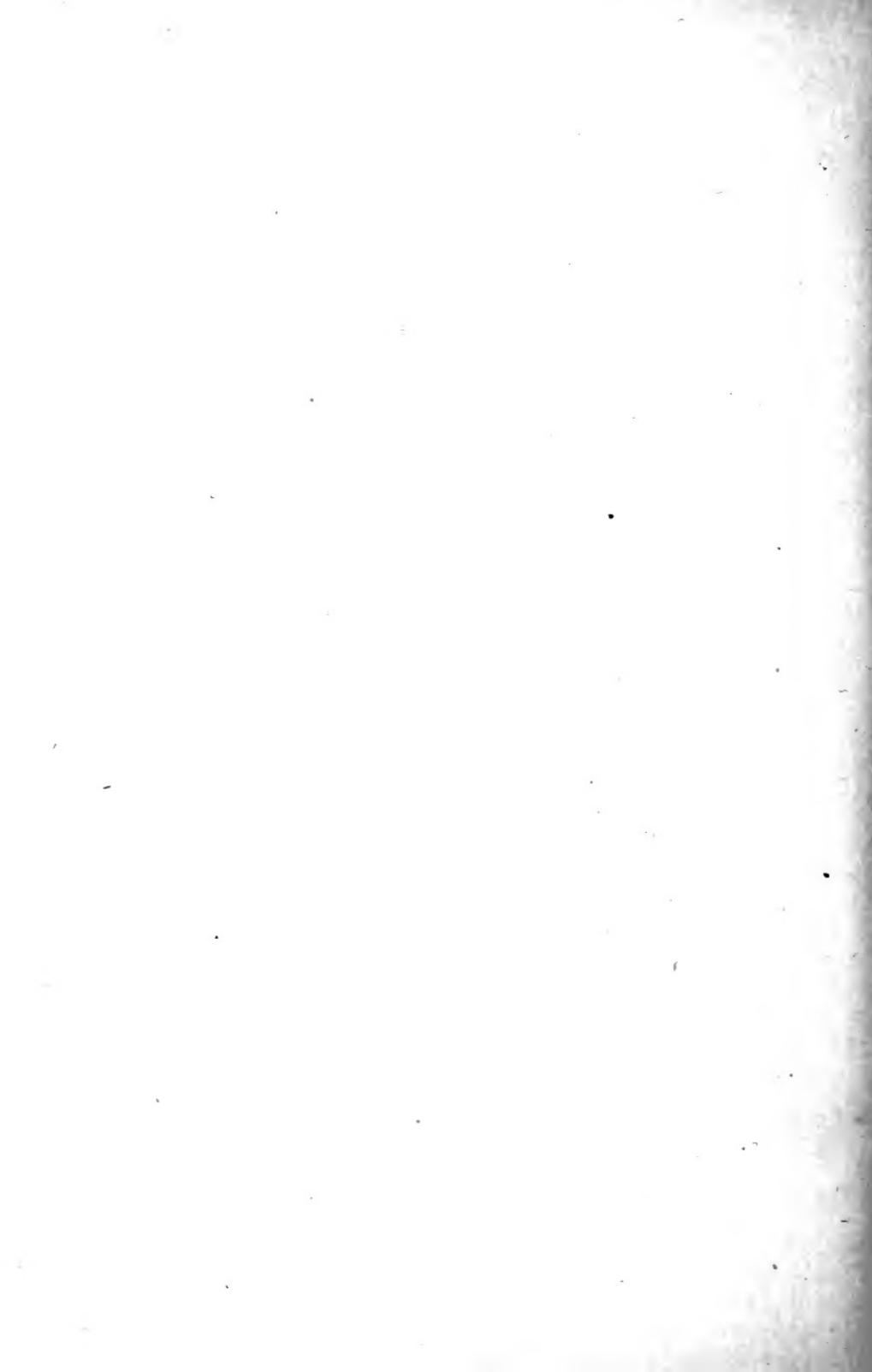
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